A

PICTURE OF SOCIETY,

OR, THE

MISANTHROPIST.

I copied from the life, and in the original perused Mankind.

ARMSTRONG.

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CHAP. I.

"Hope, deceptive enchantress! goddess of self-created bliss! inspire my heart; look from thy airy regions of imagination, thy throne of ever-varying brightness; raise thy voice to strains of rapture, and while Echo and Love return the magic tones of thy seductive song, steal my soul from the dull and frigid bondage of reason."

Such was the dream of youthful enthusiasm. The goddess heard my prayer; but, like her sex, faithless and enchanting, she caught me in her flowery fetters, intoxicated me with her cup, and after leading me through worlds of ideal bliss, fled and left me to despair!

Entering on the busy scenes of life with a heart innocent as the first smile that played on my infant lips, an imagination glowing with highly-coloured pictures of human nature (pictures sketched by the hand of Hope), my soul sighed after perfection: and surely, if beauty the most dazzling and sublime were worthy to enshrine a soul of angelic purity, Virtue herself might wear the form of Matilda ——. No statuary could adopt a finer model of Grecian symmetry, nor poet imagine a love or a grace which her countenance did not display: it was beauty in all its mild and touching languor; her eyes beaming with sentimental softness, her interesting and negligent deportment, her air, at once

so modest and so noble, overwhelmed my heart with a torrent of such exquisitely delightful sensations, that, even if I could have regained my freedom, I would have preferred the contemplation of her charms to the highest felicity which indifference would enable me to taste; for I felt exalted in my own eyes, by the consciousness of possessing a heart capable of valuing her perfections. She blended the most insinuating sweetness with the dignity of her lofty pride; and when she deigned to address me, when those beauteous eyes turned on me their ineffable and fatal beams, and the most harmonious voice issued from those lips, I hung enamoured on her accents, forgot what she said, and felt conscious only of the honor, the dangerous felicity of being the object of her attentions.

I believed that so indolent a temper was incapable of vanity, and that a smile so lovely could never cloak deceit. But Matilda was false, and I ceased even to

wish for happiness. At first, the void in my heart was filled by another passion; pride urged me to bear with firmness the demolition of all my earthly hopes, nor let the vain heart of Matilda see her slave humbled to the dust. I dropped no tear; I smothered the rising sigh: like the proud oak, unbending, I met the storm; but the effort was too much, and reason paid a debt at which sensibility need not have blushed.

Slowly I recovered from this gloomy eclipse of the soul: but though reason, alas! too soon, too powerfully resumed its empire; all the sweet illusions, the fond enthusiasm, the brilliant deceptions of life were gone. "Who," I exclaimed, "would withdraw the veil that hides futurity from our knowledge? We are blessed in ignorance; its delusive mists obscure life's chequered scene: borne on the wings of hope, we seek an imaginary good; every setting sun brings with it a tale of disappointment; but every rising

sun witnesses a new pursuit. Desire of attainment disguises the difficulty; we substitute the wish for the power, and expect a day to perform a work of ages. Man, uncertain as his being is, thinks and talks and prosecutes, as if the end of his existence were the only doubtful event upon earth. Oh, I have felt what it is to trust to human joys! I have revelled in imaginary security; but where are now the smiling visions of my early youth? All fled! all destroyed! What an illusion is happiness, when woman is called upon to realize the fond hopes of the heart! How could fancy, in its wildest flight, pursue the phantom in the shape of woman? Truth, love, sincerity; heavenly sounding terms, and in heaven only to be found; why are we taught to believe in your existence? are we to be happy only in illusion?"

These were the ebullitions of my wild despair: let the history of my future life determine their justice.

Persuaded by a man who called himself my friend (and Augustus was such, if such there be on earth), I once more entered the busy world of pleasure; but not to taste of it. I felt a gloomy satisfaction in tracing the hidden recesses of that den of folly, the human heart;—but a spectator at the puppet-show of life, for I had purchased indifference at the expence of happiness. Yet I smiled to see that brittle machine, man, unconscious of the secret springs by which he is moved, and seemingly ignorant of the end for which he is created. Vain race! deceiving and deceived, ever grasping a shadow, sacrificing at the gilded shrine of vanity, while nature, bearing the stamp of a divine artificer (like every other blessing that is easily enjoyed), has lost in your eyes its value and its charms.

In the prosecution of this pursuit, however, I found that, as a mere spectator, I should acquire little information: actions I might see; but, unless I acted myself,

I should remain ignorant of motives. Many sage philosophers are so occupied with the performance of their characters, so anxious to strike the beholders with awe, that their faculties become absorbed in self, and the vanity of looking profound prevents their being really so. While preparing a scrutinizing glance, they lose the moment of observation, they knit the brow, fold the arms, mistake sulky discontent for philosophic coldness, and because they are silent, fancy themselves observing.

Resolved to do something more than strut about and call myself an observer, I became once more a man of society. How often, amidst the gay circles of folly, have I forgot the motive which led me thither, and with surprise detected myself, still elated by vanity, soothed by pleasure, or stimulated by hope. He who would reason, must permit himself to feel; and to judge of human nature we must take a near view of it. The bold and conspicuous vices which arrest public attention, have

little to interest the philosopher and excite the investigating mind: it is the finer and more complicated foibles of the heart, which, while they escape the tribunal of the laws, interrupt the harmony of society; it is these which call for the correcting voice of the satirist, and supply the philosopher with inexhaustible materials for the instruction of mankind.

The two great powers by which society is held together, and by which its crimes are repressed, are the laws of religion and the laws of our country: but in social life, there are innumerable violations of man's happiness, over which those laws have no control, and which are cognizable alone to the laws of society itself. But, as the profligate and disorderly are contemners of religion and law; so those who deserve the lash of satire, declaim against its utility, and endeavour to stifle its voice. The proud, the ignorant, the presumptuous, the ridiculous, and the stupid, detest the discrimination on which they fail to im-

pose, and wish all the world would make as little use of reason as they do themselves. These, assuming the name of good nature, say, that for their part "they wish to avoid making enemies; and when they cannot speak well of people, they make it a rule not to speak of them at all." Now this is an admirable system! for thus, by permitting vice, they sanction it, and by not opposing, assist its progress.

Indiscriminate praise is as injurious as indiscriminate censure, it equally confounds the distinctions between right and wrong. When mediocrity receives the reward of excellence, men are deprived of the motive for attainment; and that praise becomes valueless which is equally bestowed on the worthless and deserving. And yet satire, which flows from a just and refined taste, discrimination, and sensibility, the heart that can feel and the genius that can express, is often confounded with scandal or defamation, which proceeds from the basest and most ignoble

sentiments. While the satirist is feared, shunned, and detested, the gossiping defamer is admitted without hesitation and treated with unbounded confidence.

This latter is what is called by the world a mighty good-sort of person, and is generally a woman, "a well-meaning creature, though sometimes perhaps a little mistaken." She is mischievous from pious principles; her love of God excuses her hatred to her neighbour, and her excessive zeal for Christian perfection robs her of Christian charity. It is her horror of vice which makes her discover it where it is not; it is her love of truth which makes her propagate the falsehood; but it is the discretion of calumniating with hypocritical sanctity, that enables her to attain the purposes of malevolence without incurring its obloquy. Thus dullness is the best quality to give impunity to a mischievous disposition, and defamation is metamorphosed into good nature when it is uttered in the name of the Lord. The satirist is

witty at the expence of vice; the defamer makes virtue his prey, and "hates the excellence he cannot reach:" the one corrects society, the other stigmatizes it. But though individuals may lament that they cannot indulge their insolent caprices, propagate dangerous sentiments, practise fashionable levity, be noisy, obtrusive, indecent, or profane, with impunity; the good order of social life and the morals of society are preserved by the discriminating severity of the satirist. The fear of ridicule will restrain those who consider justice and virtue as empty sounds; present odium will terrify, when future punishment is despised; and he who is insensible to conscience, and laughs at a God, is yet susceptible to the feelings of shame and alive to the poignancy of satire.

Thus the intercourses of life are sweetened and preserved, and even selfishness learns to contribute to the happiness of others in order to secure its own. Let those who deny the efficacy of satire, ask

their own hearts if the fear of its lash has not given a decency to their conduct, in cases too frivolous for higher considerations to affect them. A respect for the opinion of the world is one of our immediate protections against evil: it gives a habit of self-denial, which, though exerted in trifles, prepares the mind for encountering greater temptations: it teaches decorum, which is an outwork of virtue: it corrects the asperities of the heart; and that fictitious virtue which it teaches, often grows into principle by the force of habit. But there are some lofty and independent spirits, who imagine that, by defying its censures, they display superior firmness of mind; who, boasting of immaculate purity of intention, place themselves in the most suspicious and perilous situations, deaf to remonstrance, undaunted by universal contempt, careless alike to the suffering of friends or the malignant triumph of enemies. Those despisers of public opinion, who make such a parade about *the silent*

testimony of a good conscience, ought, however, to recollect that they owe something to society as well as to their own feelings; and that it is a part of virtue to seem virtuous; for weak minds, encouraged by their examples, really practise the crimes which they but affect.

That is a strange kind of conscience, then, which can boast of its silent consolations, while giving a precedent to vice, disturbing the order of society, and violating the sanctity of virtue. The fact is, few despise the censures of the world but those who intend to deserve them. A contempt for public opinion, so far from being a proof of firmness, generally proceeds from a vicious weakness, which shrinks from the practice of those virtues by which alone the good opinion of the world can be obtained: for mankind, generally speaking, forms a fair estimate of character; and though it is sometimes mistaken in particular events, though facts are magnified and altered, and stories

fabricated, to the momentary injury of individuals; yet calumny is soon refuted, and innocence, like the light of heaven, can suffer but a transitory eclipse.

I seldom believe a circumstantial tale of scandal, be it ever so plausibly dressed up. I allow for the misconceptions of dullness and the exaggerations of envy. But when the general tenor of conduct betrays a propensity to vice; when the radical principles of an individual are universally arraigned; I confess that I am neither credulous enough to be duped by imposing manners, nor do I pretend to that hypocritical good-nature which countenances those whose conduct my reason cannot approve. When, by our own imprudence, we have drawn upon ourselves its censures, we must not accuse the world of unjust severity, if its censures are severe. They are useful; for public opinion, which is the test of national morals, is also the protection of national purity. Let us not then, relaxing that system of moral severity which has hitherto

preserved our country virtuous, respectable, and free, plead obscurity of rank or mediocrity of talent, to extenuate our vices. The morality of a nation is the accumulated morality of its individuals; private honesty is public spirit; and the true patriot is he, who best fulfils the duties of a Husband, a Parent, a Master, and a Friend: yes, the virtue of the cottage is the proudest security of the throne.

CHAP. II.

WEALTH, though it does not possess one quality which fits us for society, is yet a certain passport into it. Wealth therefore procured me admittance into the first circles in town; and though the cause was not very flattering to self-love, it favored my immediate pursuit, which was neither ambition nor pleasure, but a desire to study the human character and to obtain an intimate knowledge of mankind.

To me, whose life had been passed in the bosom of domestic tranquillity, whose pleasures were confined within the limits of a good library and the conversation of a few amiable intelligent companions, how new, how brilliant, how imposing was the scene which now unfolded itself. In every

countenance I met a smile of kindness, professions of friendship flowed from every tongue, and for a moment I believed they were sincere. When courtiers can impose upon each other, it is little wonder that they should impose upon me. Nothing can be more insinuating than their address. By a judicious mixture of oblique flattery and respectful ease, they put the mind into that happy frame which inclines it to approve. An external complacency, an air of observance, a turn of expression the most happy and conciliating, would incline superficial observers to believe them endowed with a superior portion of the "milk of human kindness." But the heart has nothing to do with all this: they depend on their wit to supply them with the language of sensibility; they bestow a minute attention on those trifling acts of ceremonious courtesy which a truly generous mind might overlook, and endeavour to atone, by suavity of manner, for their de-

ficiency in liberal acts. Thus politeness becomes more necessary as the heart becomes more depraved, and hypocrisy, which is the most despicable vice, supplies the place of the noblest virtues. Here all is false, studied, and superficial. Their virtue consists in throwing the most becoming drapery over vice; they despise the flattery which imposes on others, but always believe that sincere which is addressed to themselves. Here beauty puts on all her captivating graces; her smile is heavenly, but it is the hacknied smile of indiscriminate allurement: it wants the charm of sensibility, the occasional relief of intellectual composure, which renders its brilliancy more striking. Manner is studied, and mind totally neglected. Every original trait is lost, every feeling repressed or eradicated, by the vitiating influence of tumultuous pleasure. Every one is suspicious, for every one knows himself to be deceitful: many affect

a love of pleasure, as a cloak to deep designs; but none affect virtue, for all are unanimous in despising it.

Oh! how often, wandering through the dreary solitude of a crowded assembly, wearied by tumultuous pleasures and fictitious gaiety, have I sighed for those days of tranquil happiness, fled for ever. Had I never known Matilda, I should have escaped the pangs of disappointment: but I should also have been a stranger to the noblest feelings of the heart. I endeavoured to cheat the tardy flight of time by seeking scenes of festive gaiety. Vain effort! her image still pursued me, still floated before my eyes, still smiled with unequalled sweetness. Fond illusions bestowed by love! who would exchange you for the languid content or vacant joy of those whom the world calls wiser?

Had I obeyed the dictates of my own heart, I should have returned once more to my beloved retirement; but the promise which friendship had extracted, was

sacred. I also looked forward to that time when, after a few years dedicated to bustle, activity, and observation, I should for ever quit the haunts of men, and in the tranquillity of philosophical retirement retrace every event and draw useful deductions from personal experience.

"Your debut," said Augustus, "was not calculated to remove the prejudices of a misanthrope. Instead of cultivating society congenial to your taste, and enjoying the sober pleasures of domestic life, you plunged into a scene of dissipation and folly; where all intercourse of the heart is checked by ceremony; where artifice is mistaken for talent, insincerity for address, and selfishness for prudence. A philosopher studies such society in vain; for, be he ever so penetrating, ever so ingenious, he will see nothing but the superficies. Mind is intirely hidden from his view, and a philosopher has nothing to do with manners. Those whom we meet but at stated times, can easily support a fictitious character; but in do-

mestic life, where a constant intercourse prevents preparation, we see the natural workings of the passions, as they are unfolded by accidental occurrences. In such an intercourse, dissimulation is vain; the heart will betray itself; the eyes will belie the studied profession of the lips; the sudden exclamation, the half-formed sentence, the hasty reply, the tear, the blush, the smile, will speak beyond a thousand words."

CHAP. III.

I NOW cultivated the society of families who, without belonging to what is called the first class, are yet near enough to catch their elegance, without imbibing their vices. Here I expected to find education less confined to exterior show, and refinement of manners produced by refinement of mind. I expected to hear less chat, but to enjoy more conversation; to be paid fewer compliments, but to receive more proofs of friendship, and to be valued for intellectual acquirements as well as for the graces of a dancing-master or the prattle of a petit-maitre.

Was it the pride of man, who loves to face dangers which he cannot conquer, that again led me into the presence of that bane and blessing of society, a woman: But

the recollection of Matilda raised a frozen rampart round my heart; and a man must have indeed a wonderful propensity to falling in love, if he could be captivated by the hacknied airs of town-bred misses, who, contaminated by promiscuous intercourse, know nothing of the world but its follies, and without reasoning or reflecting on what they see, make no more use of experience than to be as dissipated, thoughtless and extravagant as their acquaintance.

I knew many very pretty girls, well bred, accomplished, and possessing all those superficial graces of manner which many mistake for elegance of mind; who, in short, were showy enough to attract attention in a ball-room, and agreeable enough to trifle away an evening with at the opera; but whose powers extended no farther. Removed to the tranquil scene of a domestic fire-side, how faded their lustre! how spiritless their conversation! Accustomed to consider public amusements as

their only places of exhibition, they cultivated no other talents but those which would enable them to shine there, and passed the intervals between one scene of vanity and another, in fretful languor or feverish anticipation. 'Tis true, that at the entrance of a stranger (and that stranger a young man) every effort was made to revive the attractive airs of ball-room vivacity; but fictitious cheerfulness can communicate no sympathy. A young lady may talk much, yet say very little; display white teeth, without displaying good humour; and play off with inimitable address all her little glances and simpers, without producing any effect on a mind which looks for sincerity, candour, and sensibility.

What puerile arts does female vanity inspire! Some, who are unable to converse, carry off stupidity with a bewitching languor and pathetic softness, and fancy that the beams which emanate from a pair of half-closed eyes, speak more feelingly to the soul than sense, fancy, and all the

graces of an elegant mind. Careless to preciseness, and systematically negligent, they practise an air of easy indifference, till it degenerates into rudeness. Others affect an irradiated intelligence of countenance, an animated quickness of comprehension, that would be satisfactory enough to the speaker, were the mind half as much in play as the features. The countenance is lighted up with predetermined approbation; the exclamation of delight anticipates the cause. A story that would draw tears from a heart open to real feeling, is heard with an unmeaning simper, and the point of an epigram is unheeded in an ostentatious attention to what will follow.

Oh, what a creature might woman be, if she but felt her own importance; if she employed her attractions, not for the mean triumph of conquering hearts, but for the glorious ambition of reforming them! How melancholy to behold women contracting their minds to the most puerile pursuits, that they might have a chance of being

comprehended by the beings whom they are ambitious of pleasing; beings who, having no faith in virtue, mistake cheerfulness for levity, and laugh at the spontaneous feelings of offended delicacy as ridiculous grimace and affectation. Can the homage of such men reflect honor on her who might draw votaries to the shrine of virtue, by arraying it in the garb of the graces? The garb ought to be attractive, for mankind are creatures of imagination.

Let not virtuous women trust too much to the justness of their cause, and despise those graces which vice so successfully employs. What man can admire virtue that seems defended only by austerity, or love a woman who thinks that to be insipid is the best test of her prudence?

How did I hate those termagant airs of prudery, after a short acquaintance with the majestic Alicia. Solemn, insipid, and austere, she acted as if all mankind were her enemies, and as if one word spoken without study and motive would convict

her. To trust a fellow-creature she considered an act of folly, and to be cheerful an act of levity. She knew that it was in vain for her to charm by grace and suavity of manner; so affected to despise what experience made her despair of acquiring. She consoled herself by reflecting that the arrows of love fell blunted from the shield of Minerva; so, stepping forward with proud defiance in her eye and more than manly roughness, declared war against the whole tribe of loves and graces, made spirited resistance without ever being attacked, and fancied herself triumphant because neglected.

Others err in the opposite extreme: oppressively animated, unceasing in laughter, exuberant in gaiety, they substitute the contortions of the body for the efforts of the mind, and make wit a mere grimace. To entertain them, a man must "nick-name God's creatures," and distort nature's fair proportions. In short, they are enchanted with him while he resembles an

ape or a mountebank, but think him intolerably dull when he degenerates into a mere rational being.

Lamentable indeed is the fate of an unfortunate lover, who sees no chance of obtaining his mistress's affection but by antics and merriment. If he really loves, the effort is intolerable. A woman of sentiment and delicacy expects a very different homage. She feels that it is impossible to trifle when the heart is interested; that, in the presence of a beloved object, there is an anxious solicitude, a sentiment too sublime for mirth, too delicate to betray itself by common-place gallantry. In the dignity of her lover's manners she discovers her best security for the steadiness of his affections; in his reserve, the respectful timidity of genuine love; and that very timidity, which inclines him to be doubtful of success, renders him at the same time most worthy of it. She knows that the flattery which charms in the lover, ends with the days of court-

ship; and she would rather hear of one generous action, one noble sacrifice to honor, and discover her influence in the refined principles of her lover, than listen to the most ardent professions and obsequious homage. The love which ostentatiously exposes itself, which is gay, voluble, and obtrusive, may flatter a giddy girl who delights in the eclat of conquest; but she who is herself capable of a dignified attachment, will know how to value the self-imposed restraints of respectful passion, and to reward the virtuous pride which seeks success by merit alone.

How seldom do we meet cheerfulness without levity, sense without pedantry, manners that at once delight the fancy and satisfy the understanding. When I see an unaffected young female, with understanding to dignify and prudence to temper gaiety; imparting ease without diminishing respect; I feel more inclined to rely upon the correct purity of her heart, than on the studied decorums of those lisping misses who, demurely tittering in their little cor-

nered circle, have been taught by their card-playing mothers and gossiping aunts, that the only quality which will enable them to pass through life with security, is the innocent incapability of ever committing themselves to an opinion.

Depending solely upon the blooms and blushes of youth, what will become of the light triflers when the age of simplicity is passed, and they can no longer make folly captivating? Mind is the only solid basis of happiness, and he who unites his fate with one of those pretty automatons, will too late discover that man is a being endowed with reasoning faculties, and that life cannot be spent with satisfaction unless those faculties, which make him lord of the creation, are unfolded and understood.

This frivolity of character is the chief cause of misery in the marriage state. Women who have no resources in their own minds, sink into indolence and indifference as soon as they lose the motive which, as girls, prompted their exertions to please. They become gossips, scolds,

and slatterns; morose wives, and tyrannical or foolishly indulgent mothers: while the unfortunate man, who formed his choice upon the generally received opinion that a mild, innocent, inexperienced girl would be most easily moulded to his wishes and governed by his will, is soon fatally convinced that ignorance is ever obstinate and folly ever capricious.

I had many opportunities of observing matrimonial infelicity. That which proceeds from temper, appears a radical evil, which no advice nor argument can correct: at least it is fair to infer that, if any effort of reason could subdue them, there are few so mad as to indulge those fatal caprices which spread misery through a domestic circle, but which exhaust their peculiar rancour in the bosom of their possessor. Indeed, selfishness, independent of principle, teaches the doctrine of self-control: for I believe that the greatest tyrant on earth never caused as much misery to others, as the indulgence of his passions procured himself.

But the unhappiness of the wedded state often proceeds from causes less seemingly important. In the days of courtship, every grace of manner, every allurement of dress, every refined sentiment and captivating charm, are employed to secure a conquest: but, that once accomplished, carelessness soon succeeds. Nay, some women actually make it a point of duty to despise every agreeable qualification, and by becoming hideous and disgusting, set jealousy asleep for ever. Thus despising the graces which first won a heart, dislike quickly usurps the place of fondness; neglecting those little amiable arts which diversify and embellish domestic life, it becomes a comfortless, insipid scene; and a man of taste, who hoped to meet a refined, intelligent companion, is astonished to find her sunk into a homely housewife, who receives his friends with constrained civility, entertains them with anecdotes of the nursery and complaints of the servants, hates every man of wit because he detains

the gentlemen at their wine, and despises every woman who does not stun her company with the insipid detail of domestic economy.

Such a creature, however, has the consolation of being called the best sort of woman in the world by all her female acquaintance, because she has neither graces nor talents to inspire competition or to excite envy. But a woman whose taste has been refined by intellectual cultivation, knows how to unite elegance with frugality, to be at once domestic and prudent, yet lively, graceful, and intelligent. She does not think it necessary to adopt the language of her cook, though she attends to the culinary arrangements; nor to neglect personal neatness and the graces of an engaging and cheerful deportment, while regulating the most minute concerns of her household. In short, she makes it a point of duty to retain the affections of her husband; and in order to render home a delightful retreat from the cares and bus-

tle of the world, she arrays her face in smiles and her form in graces; she cultivates the arts of conversation, and endeavours to cheer his hours of solitude by the most winning sweetness and endearing complacency.

Domestic life scarcely admits of any medium. When there is a constant jarring of tempers, interests, and opinions, I cannot imagine any thing more dreary and comfortless. But when candour and cheerfulness dwell in the domestic circle, when each individual contributes to the general happiness, it affords the most delightful picture of rational content.

Dissipated minds, accustomed to an eternal tumult of varied pleasures, would call such a life insipid; and to those who know it only by description, it will ever appear so. Descriptions of domestic life fail to convey an image to the mind, because there are no striking features to arrest the attention. It is an assemblage of such minute attributes, it depends so

entirely on the peculiar adaption of circumstances to tempers, that, to conceive it, it must be experienced. It will not attract superficial observers; but he who has once tasted its pure and simple pleasures, will carry the remembrance of it to his latest moments, and in the midst of courts and camps, surrounded by glare and pomp and revelry, will still sigh for the tranquil pleasures of the heart, and "remember that such things were, and were most precious."

Alas! the world is ever more anxious to appear happy than to be so. Those who are most capable of contributing to the pleasures of home, seem to think it a waste of powers; as if the intellectual faculties could be impaired by use, and as if nature had bestowed on every individual a certain measure of agreeability which requires economy in the disposal of. Good nature often sits yawning in a corner, wishing to be cheerful, but certain of not being met with a corresponding sentiment, and

fearing the illiberal constructions of rigid plain sense. All the charms of social intercourse, every warm sentiment, every tender affection, are sacrificed to that suspicious and gloomy prudence, which, always armed against some imaginary enemy, discovers an insidious motive in the most accidental observation, a plot in every whisper, and falsehood in every smile. In such hearts the language of affection produces no sympathy, the most generous action creates distrust, and the warmest zeal of friendship is met with reserve and returned with measured circumspection or inanimate politeness.

Friendship! what a mockery of words! Every accidental association of convenience, of interest, or of pleasure, is dignified with its sacred name. It is made up of exquisite sympathies, romantic appeals, and enthusiastic professions. But it exhausts itself in sentiments, and evaporates at the first approach of adversity. The most delicate friendship yields to the

most vulgar accidents. The whisper of a malignant gossip, a trifling pecuniary transaction, can change the sentimental whine of disinterested friendship into rancorous malice and scurrilous invective. It is melancholy to see by what insignificant circumstances friends are estranged from each other: indeed, the most certain termination of friendship is when one party lays the other under an important obligation. Instantly pride takes the alarm. Instead of repaying the giver by enjoying the gift, we receive it as a humiliating boon, and consider the superiority which the power of bestowing seems to imply, as sufficient to cancel the obligation.

But the true way to judge, in all cases of feeling between man and man, is by exchanging situations. I would ask those whose too sensitive feelings produce all the effect of insensibility; who, spurning the offers of friendship, act through an excess of gratitude, as if they were totally desti-

tute of every vestige of it; I would ask them, if they themselves ever bestowed a favor? and if they did not feel more than compensated by the act itself? If, then, they are convinced that it is a pleasure to give, they should consider it, for the same reason, a pleasure to receive, since it obliges the person to whom they are themselves most obliged. Reciprocal favors are the bonds of civilized society. To be independent is not the lot of man: it is the impracticable theory of a heart too proud to owe and too inefficient to repay. A good heart *receives* an obligation by being permitted to *confer* it; but when favors are ostentatiously bestowed, and accompanied by the supercilious airs of patronage, then, indeed, the weight becomes oppressive. The gift of friendship ennobles both parties; but he who exacts gratitude, more than cancels the debt.

Alas! we too often see that the superiority of rank which enables a man to be

generous, prevents his being just. To reason with him on his errors, is to rebel against his authority; and the language of truth, which would teach him to discover right and to pursue it, is silenced by the haughtiness of situation. He seeks respect without endeavouring to create esteem, expects affection without feeling it, and demands obedience, careless whether his demands are possible to perform or reasonable if performed. He knows, and takes good care to recollect, that dependence has duties to perform and obligations to fulfil; but banishes the idea that he too is bound by duties just as strong, obligations just as imperative, though different in their nature. More of the miseries of life are occasioned by neglect of the lesser virtues than by the actual commission of crimes; and daily experience points out candour as one of the most useful of the minor virtues. How many are separated by foolish punctilios, mistaken intentions, and suspicious

appearances, and for want of that noble condescension, lose the blessing of life—a friend! If a friend be worth having, he is worth regaining; and if a circumtance be important enough to lessen esteem, it is important enough to deserve investigation.

Candour is not alone an amiable, but a useful quality. It forms a bond of mutual confidence between man and man; and when opposed to cunning and artifice, will be ever found triumphant. Deceit meets deceit on equal terms; it is prepared against every wile, and armed against every stratagem. But there is an awful simplicity in candour, which overwhelms, convinces, and which, soaring above the low calculations of cunning, totally disconcerts its machinations.

Uncandid minds always arrogate to themselves the merit of superior prudence. They talk of the danger of committing themselves; that words are liable to misconstruction, but that silence is

always secure. In short, they have good plain sense at their side; but the sentiment does more honor to the head than to the heart. It may be prudent, but is not amiable; it may obtain cold respect, but will never conciliate love.

Let little minds, who are incapable of distinguishing between cunning and wisdom, between selfishness and prudence, dignify it with what epithets they please; but those who are deficient in candour, must ever be deficient in good nature; for they constantly sacrifice the peace of others to some unfeeling calculation of personal security.

To conceal a truth is often productive of as much mischief as to propagate a falsehood. How often do we see people acting from the most laudable motives, yet producing nothing but misery and discontent, for want of making those motives known. Supporting an impenetrable silence under mysterious appearances, suspicions are excited; doubts arise;

friends become estranged; and anxious affection is left to mourn in secret the imaginary ruin of its fondest hopes. Candour would soon dispel the frightful monsters of the imagination, and elevate despondency to rapture. What a heart then must he have who witnesses the evil, and yet withholds the remedy! "A few words can rescue misery out of its distress," and God knows that security is dearly purchased, which wrings one tear from the eye of sensibility, which adds one pang to the inevitable load of human suffering!

Yet often we see the kindest intention defeated by misconception. To defend one's-self is a crime; to expostulate is an insult; and while our words breathe peace, the simple effort of speaking is considered a summons to war. A calm explanation may convince a man that he has wronged you, but he will hate you more for the discovery than for the crime,

and would rather believe you infamous than himself unjust.

We too often mistake insensibility for strength of mind, and forgetting that firmness becomes ferocity, unless it be tempered by feeling, blush at being merciful, and glory in an unforgiving disposition. Forgiveness was the language of Him who died for our sins, and should be echoed by every heart that beats beneath the Christian banner. In God it was mercy; in man it is acknowledgment: it is a sound of sweet peace to the receiver; but to the giver it is like the dew which returns from Heaven to bless the source from which it sprung.

CHAP. IV.

It was my unhappy fate to have the pleasing expectations of my imagination constantly checked by the painful convictions of my understanding. When I sought for the easy intercourse of friendship, I was overwhelmed with ceremony; when I uttered the spontaneous language of affection, I was suspected of an interested motive; when animated with virtuous emotions, I betrayed sentiments too exalted perhaps for worldly prudence, too refined for vulgar minds; I was smiled at as an enthusiast, or ridiculed as a romantic visionary. In short, I found that, if I would be considered a man of sense, I must relinquish the character of a man of feeling; that I must deserve to be despised, in order to make myself respected; and

lose the esteem of my own heart, before I could obtain that of the world.

There is a sort of plodding good sense so securely entrenched behind the bulwarks of established rule and received opinions, that, though it cannot convince, it will certainly silence: for what appeal can be made, where there are no feelings to touch, and when the understanding, narrowed by its intercourse with prejudiced and illiberal minds, rejects every opinion which a century has not established? Argue with such persons on the broad basis of philosophy; they will instantly meet you with some thread-bare maxim or local fact, and instead of laying their minds open to conviction, congratulate themselves on being proof against fine words and flourishing sentences. The ignorant man adopts an opinion without consideration, and supports it with asperity; his zeal produces persecution; his conviction, hatred: but the enlightened man knows the fallacy of human judgment,

and never adopts an opinion without supposing the possibility of its being erroneous.

I had every where to encounter the obstinate prejudices of little minds; and a sentiment, which would gain me almost divine honors in one house, would stamp me a villain at the next door. Would I be received, therefore, as a friend, I must affect conviction on certain little points, and adapt my opinions to the peculiar prejudices of every family: I must hate those whom they hate, love those whom they love, admire the same authors, approve or condemn the same measures of the ministry, and pronounce the same sentence on a political enterprize, though no human judgment could possibly decide on the result of an experiment which had not been tried.

Such are the unjust effects of prejudice, that abstract and speculative questions become subjects of personal animosity; and to differ in theory, is worse than to

injure in practice. But of all the plagues that render society intolerable, save me from the inoffensive mighty-good-sort-of-man, who loves all the world, praises all the world, is the dupe of all the world; whom every body despises, but who could never arrive at the dignity of being hated. Should he possess rank and riches, he will give fair words, extend his hand with a most promising and patronizing smile; would be very happy to serve his friends, but really all the world knows he is a plain man, not fond of bustle, has no influence at court, was never ambitious of great men's company, and then "Pray come and dine with me" concludes the harangue. Should his rank be less conspicuous, he constantly takes care to remind his friends of his humble lot, receives an equal as a patron, and the most common civility as an unmerited condescension. Passive under calumny, resigned to insult, he would rather be despised by all the world, than make an enemy of one individual, by asserting

his consequence and supporting his character. Mistaking indiscriminate approbation for good nature, he forms the most disgraceful friendships, and becomes the dupe of vicious and designing people, because he would neither risk their bad word nor hurt their feelings by a repulse.

Such a man is always peculiarly happy in setting a company by the ears: if an argument be supported with spirit and animation, he instantly expostulates on the folly of losing one's temper, hopes the good gentlemen will forget what has passed and shake hands. He constantly revives forgotten animosities, by endeavouring to accomplish a formal reconciliation, mistakes playful raillery for acrimonious sarcasm, and by endeavouring to explain away an imaginary offence, points out a meaning which it does not carry, and creates a feeling the most foreign from what was intended. Thus, while meaning well, he is eternally doing ill, and proves that a perverted understanding may produce as much mischief as a bad heart.

CHAP. V.

Despairing of finding any thing to interest my affections; tired of the selfish indolent composure of a society which, without the embellishments of taste, wit, or sentiment, and depending for conversation on the misfortunes or follies of its friends, plods soberly on in all the unfeeling apathy of prosperity; I fled to the exhilarating circle of a club composed of a number of fashionable and elegant young men.

I had before formed a very high opinion of some,—those who, in female society, supported the cause of religion and virtue. But to judge of young men, it is necessary to see them freed from the restraints imposed by the presence of females: the

scene then changes; uproar is gaiety; profligacy, spirit; profaneness, wit; and he who is most daring in depravity, is most admired and imitated. Though some minds may soar above the scene, none have courage to introduce worthier subjects, or venture one moral idea, for fear of drawing upon themselves the ridicule of libertines whom they despise. Careless of respect, provided they escape the momentary sneer, they are wicked for fear of being thought weak.

How little the vain votary of popularity knows, that while he barters the respect of the world and the peace of his own bosom for the applause of a few worthless associates, they despise him for vices practised by themselves, and laugh at the follies into which their own example had betrayed him. The most abandoned have their hours of meditation, and though they do not themselves obey the dictates of reason, their better feelings revolt from the credulous companions of their excesses,

who rush upon ruin because it happens to be called pleasure. Thus we see, that those young men who run together the race of dissipation, seldom form lasting friendships. No,—the selfishness of the libertine unites with common policy, to rely on principle, feeling and honor alone, and never to trust those who are unable to act for themselves.

Augustus remarked, that the immorality I lament does not so often proceed from inherent depravity as from a yielding temper. It may be so; but what comfort is it to him whose house falls and crushes his dearest treasure, to be told that the ruin was occasioned, not by the tempest or the earthquake, but by the imbecility of its nature? How often have I seen those thoughtless victims of folly deserted and despised, when wealth, that source of all evil, no longer enabled them to minister to the wants of their selfish associates. I was then trusted and consulted. In that calm hour life is stripped of its

delusive pageantries. Sweet and salutary is the language of a friend; self-love loses its magic influence when friendship dares to be sincere. Dangerous is the sophistry of self-love! which can dignify a folly and sanctify a crime, discover to us faults that never existed in another, and virtues that never existed in ourselves. It is a deceitful enemy, the indirect, but active delegate of sin; and he who listens to the syren is undone!

I often expostulated with my companions on the dangerous pursuits that occupied their time and thoughts; but if I was listened to with patience by some, it was more the composure of indifference than conviction: they ridiculed the idea, that those pleasures which delighted while new, could, when that charm was passed, be followed by satiety; and because sorrow was not in view, they thought it would never arrive. The prophetic voice which would warn youth, is generally heard with impatience and contempt; before a

danger is encountered, it appears insignificant; all rely on their powers of resistance, they meet temptations, and are undone!

He is wise, then, who flies at the first appearance of danger; for, to expose ourselves to temptation, is to trust our virtue to chance and invite an enemy whom we may not be able to repulse. Who can answer for his own heart? who can say how he will act under the influence of feelings to which he is at present a stranger? How sage, how edifying are the reflections of those who, being yet unassailed by temptation, comment on the frailties of others. But in ourselves, every crime is palliated; for the heart that desires evil always knows how to excuse it: like a false friend, it first creates temptation and then flatters into a security, by which we are undone. We console ourselves by reflecting that others are as guilty as ourselves; that this one crime, which we find it so difficult to resist, shall be our last,

and that we shall certainly atone for it by the strict integrity of our future lives. Thus creating a necessity to which we yield, we oppose those dangerous and illusive distinctions of right and wrong which fashion and convenience have established, to the plain, demonstrated, unequivocal commandments of Heaven. We forget that temptations are given to prove that virtue, which, without trials, can deserve no reward; and that while we pause upon an attractive vice, seek for encouraging precedents, bargain with conscience, and calculate chances of mercy, our eternal happiness hangs upon the decision. Every other good deed that we perform rewards itself: we are often selfish, when we fancy ourselves charitable, and merely seek to secure our own happiness by contributing to that of others. But in denying ourselves a present enjoyment, we suffer a painful deprivation without any recompence but a sense of duty. We talk of atoning for a voluntary crime by the

strict integrity of our future lives; but has not experience warned us to place no reliance on our own resolution? were we not once seduced into error against the conviction of our own reason and conscience, and will not every deviation become easier through habit? The mercy of God is unlimited; but the life of man is too uncertain to risk eternity upon the chance of future atonement. The only certainty that life affords, is the certainty of its own termination. Which of us can say that he will behold tomorrow? The youth who supports the steps of his aged parent, sinks into the grave before him; the lover is cut off ere the completion of his hopes; and the orator, silenced in sudden death, leaves his favourite period unclosed!

That man is an imperfect creature, ever liable to err, is a self-evident assertion, a melancholy deduction drawn from our own hearts. But he who listens to the

counsels of friendship, who disdains not conviction, and who exerts the powers of his mind, not to defend error, but to conquer it, he alone is truly great. The man who has not candour enough to acknowledge a fault, has seldom virtue enough to correct it.

Though the revelry of Bacchanalian rioters for a moment, by its novelty, dissipated my thoughts, it could neither interest my affections, nor satisfy my understanding; and so far from lulling me into forgetfulness, it brought the past more strongly before me, by forcing upon my mind comparisons at once painful and soothing. Oh, memory! be thou to me in place of all that I have lost! recall those moments of my early youth, those moments so precious and so fleeting, when hope played in my heart and pleasure in my eye, when every smile was bliss, and every thought was rapture! Sweet and cherished recollections! asso-

ciated with the softest feelings, the gentlest sympathies of our nature. That spot, on which our infant limbs were cherished; that spot, where our hearts first learned to throb with fond affection, or within whose bosom cold is laid the earliest object of our regard; that spot, which even the holy romance of enthusiasm has pictured as the Elysium of a future state; to thee our hearts turn in the remotest climes and regions, and thy image still solaces the decline of our days by recalling the visions of our childhood!

"Every heart," said Augustus, "loves to recall the memory of childhood, and all imagine it the season of cloudless felicity. Alas! it only proves that happiness is more in idea than reality: that season too had its cares and disappointments; but the sorrows of infancy are forgotten in a more mature age, or are deemed too puerile to interrupt happiness, while its pleasures dwell in the heart, because they are the pleasures of purity and innocence,

which are ever congenial to the human mind, prized by the most worthless, and regretted by those who have no longer hearts capable of tasting their charms. The mountain that looks blue and smooth at a distance, discovers, on a nearer approach, a barren and rugged aspect: time produces the same effect on the occurrences of life; it softens or obliterates every asperity, and presents to the retrospective mind one smiling image of tranquillity. To enjoy the passing hour, and arrest the fugitive joys of life, has ever been recommended by the poet and the philosopher; it has been urged with all the persuasion of eloquence, and illustrated with all the decorations of wit. In vain, however, is the reason convinced, or the imagination captivated; discontent still sighs over fancied sorrows, conjures up past misfortunes, forbodes future, and dignifies itself with the name of sensibility. All are ready to acknowledge the truth of an aphorism, and to display ingenuity in its applica-

tion to living characters; but few have humility enough to apply it to themselves, and fewer still have wisdom enough to profit by the lesson."

CHAP. VI.

I NOW sought a friend to whom I could fully unburthen my heart, who would neither reason nor ridicule, but who would sympathize in sorrows that no reason could remove. Towards one man I was imperceptibly drawn by the attractive charms of his conversation. His wit was more cheerful than dazzling. He employed learning but as one of the many means of pleasing; and while he instructed the mind, he seemed anxious only to amuse. His conversation was a delightful rest to the soul; and he secured approbation by not appearing to exact it. Pity seemed the ruling passion of his mind; at least tears and eloquence were lavished on the darling theme, and charity caught new graces adorned by his language.

But it was the eloquence of genius, not of feeling. His eye glistened at a tale of sorrow, when that tear was likely to be consecrated by the applause of the world. His was the stage-box sensibility, that with ostentatious tenderness lavishes tears upon fictitious distress, while the pining children of poverty are regarded with philosophic composure,—that mechanism of feeling which vibrates only to the passing gale of popularity.

I soon lost all pleasure in the society of a man who was most deceitful when most he charmed, and attached myself to a character apparently so congenial to my own, that I thought no time could lessen the avidity with which I sought his conversation. He, like me, felt disgust to society; but, like me, he had never tasted its sweetest joys, had never revelled in the golden dreams of hope, nor known that blessed moment when the silent eloquence of a glance bids every hope be realized.

But I soon learned to distinguish be-

tween the gloomy discontent of constitutional misanthropy and the fastidiousness of a too susceptible and disappointed heart. In his youth he had gained some celebrity by his argumentative talents: logic was his favorite study, controversy his only recreation; and he entered society without any object or desire but to engage in disputation. Imposing and sophistical, he puzzled many whom he failed to convince, and politeness taught others to relinquish an unimportant discussion. Thus, elated by imaginary successes, from being ingenious he soon became dogmatical, and conceived every opposition to his opinion was an insult to his understanding.

A sophistical man, who first supports an opinion merely to display his ingenuity, is apt to argue himself into conviction of its truth. He soon began to advance extravagant paradoxes, and propagate the most dangerous sentiments, until, at length, his principles became as odious as

his manners were tiresome. Finding himself, therefore, shunned, he resolved to make a voluntary retreat, and passed his days in sullen and gloomy hatred. He could tolerate the follies which gave him an opportunity of displaying his eloquence, but could not forgive the blind and indiscriminating stupidity that called his lofty declamations bombast, and his elegant fastidiousness pride and malevolence. Hatred seemed the natural complection of his mind; a look, a word, created the most horrid suspicion. Suspicion was soon magnified into certainty; he triumphed in the discovery, cherished the growing aversion, and never forgave the person who undeceived him. In short, to find pretexts to be miserable was the only use he made of reason. He could forgive those who injured him, but never forgave those whom he injured. He was capable of performing a generous action, but the object of his bounty was ever after the victim of a barbarous ty-

ranny. His maxims were, never to trust, and he could not be deceived; never to love, and he could not be disappointed; and he believed himself wise, when only suspicious. But was he happy in his security? Oh, no; the canker of discontent preyed upon his heart; he was dreaded by the cheerful, despised by the wise, and avoided by those who had real sorrows to lament.

Augustus saw how dangerous such a companion must prove to a mind already so oppressed as mine, and he endeavoured to accomplish, by general reflections and oblique insinuation, what he dreaded to attempt by open expostulation; well knowing that the pride of man is for ever at war with his reason and interest. He described, with all the eloquence of feeling, how injurious to the interests of society is the indulgence of misanthropy; what misery a discontented mind draws upon itself, and all those within its power; like the fabled Upas tree, breathing

pestilential vapours, and with poisonous influence expelling utility and joy from its fatal atmosphere.

"When some sentimental caprice is disappointed," continued he, "gloom instantly seizes on the mind: we despise the pleasures and comforts within our reach, and distorting the most promising appearances into melancholy augurs, sullenly resign ourselves to hopeless despondency. We never consider how much more misery is below, than happiness above us; how many pine in want and agony, or suffer the more horrible pangs of a guilty conscience. Alas! millions of human beings consider a mere exemption from want and pain as the height of human felicity; while those blessed with health, independence, innocence, and friends, close their eyes on conviction and dream of imaginary sorrows. We complain of the small portion of happiness we enjoy; we accuse our fellow-creatures and the state of society, forgetting that happi-

ness is a sacred relic committed to the sanctuary of our own hearts. Who is to blame if that sanctuary is profaned by every ignoble passion? if pride, envy, ambition, revenge, steal the bright image of heaven? Happiness, how fleeting! like time, unmarked but by its flight, and prized only when it cannot be recalled; the present moment for ever neglected, while a future, which beckons with delusive smiles, yet ever flies our grasp, employs all our thoughts. When we look back on past pleasures, and, dressing them in imaginary charms, sigh the useless wish, "Oh, that those days of bliss would return!" let us ask ourselves, was that time more prized when present, than this moment of useless regret; and may not this neglected moment be the regretted past of a future day?"

Alas! how much easier is it to convince the understanding than to reform the heart! Memory still conjures up visions of departed joys, and argument affects not

the blighted feelings of disappointed hope. Ye, who never knew the sweet dream of life; who never hung enamoured on accents that gave back the image of your own soul, softened and refined; who view the rising sun but as the cause of light and heat, not as the harbinger of returning bliss; it is for you to argue, but for me to feel!

CHAP. VII.

As yet my intimacies had been confined to men whose desultory educations might, I thought, account for the unsteadiness of their principles and conduct. But a man who practises any of the learned professions, is obliged to pursue a systematical course of study: many years of his life are, of necessity, dedicated to the attainment of wisdom; and the mind which is thus capable of devoting itself to one serious pursuit, must acquire habitual steadiness. A youth then becomes acquainted with the wise men of all ages, before he knows the fashions and follies of his own day; his mind is impressed with the great and simple images of past glory; he converses with the heroes of old; he becomes, in

idea, one of them; his young heart expands with the hope of one day performing those acts of justice, magnanimity and self-denial, that fill the historic page. Early impressions, to which maturer reason cannot subscribe, often triumph over that reason and sway the human mind: how powerful, then, must the influence of those studies be, which, commencing with the earliest dawn of reason, still bear the test of matured and cultivated experience.

My measures, like my opinions, ever hastily formed, I sought the society of barristers, whose eloquence and talents I had often admired. As pleasant companions and elegant scholars, even my ardent imagination was gratified. Learned, without pedantry, they unite at once the scholar and the gentleman; and with the most discriminating knowledge of the world, their manners are unaffected and entirely free from supercilious airs of superior wisdom. They possess gaiety refined by wit, society and reflecion. In

their society the vociferous and opinionated are tamed by well-directed ridicule, and the reserved are inspired by the force of example. But the vices which once drove me from the society of the young and gay, flourish here in bold luxuriance: their immorality is more delicate, more refined, and consequently more dangerous; for though the profane jest of ignorant profligacy may shock the feelings, it endangers very little the principles: but when wit is exerted in the cause of vice, how easily are the weak and credulous imposed on, and how encouraging is such an example to those who, incapable of discriminating between a splendid and a just argument, would not wish to detect the fallacy of opinions which flatter the evil propensities of their own hearts. Those who, in the open court, declaimed with all the persuasive energy of genius in the cause of virtue, who quoted Heaven's high authority to prove, and its awful denunciations to terrify, were at that moment guilty of

crimes more flagitious, though more private, than the wretch whom their eloquence hurries to the last tribunal of eternal justice. The interest of a client is often neglected in the ardour of personal invective; or in the pride of eloquence, they sacrifice truth for antithesis, reason for repartee, and argument for alliteration.

"Education," said Augustus, "is undoubtedly the best security for the morals of society: but by education I do not mean the learning of the schools alone. You lay a great stress upon the sublime lessons of virtue imbibed from a research into past ages. 'Tis true, we may be dazzled by the exploits of ancient heroes; their deeds may surprize, and their virtues inflame us: but the deeds which elevate the hero, would often disgrace the Christian; or, even when actions are conformable to the pure precepts of Christianity, the motive wanting renders the example useless.

"Religion," continued he, "is made subservient to every other study, or is entirely neglected; while a confused, speculative principle, which those who talk of do not understand, is substituted for it. Every individual has his peculiar code, which he fashions to his own desires and pursuits, acknowledges no tribunal but his own heart, and seeks no reward but its approbation. But can a judge be just who is interested? Oh, how weak is the morality of sentiment when opposed to pleasure or ambition! He who expects no future rewards nor punishment, who believes this world the last scene of his existence, can have no motive sufficiently strong to counteract the influence of human infirmity. And when religion, with all its hopes and terrors, is insufficient to guard the best of us from some deviations, can the cold theory of moral rectitude, the abstract beauty of virtue, hold human passions in command, and silence the pleadings of self-interest?

When we have no motive for virtue, but the gratification it affords our own hearts, should vice promise us a higher gratification, virtue has no longer any influence over us. A mind replete with good nature and benevolence, though unprotected by religious principles, may, if circumstances be propitious, pass through life without committing base and dishonourable actions. Such a man is virtuous while unassailed; he will not seek to commit evil; but will he resist temptation when resistance is followed by no reward? The question requires no answer, humanity acknowledges its own frailty, and adores that mercy which accepts penitence instead of perfection. The lot of irreligion is poisoned pleasures and privations without reward; while religion, adding the charms of hope to present enjoyment, makes us taste even in this life the reward which we seek in the next. Oh, ye whose talents have been exerted to tear from suffering humanity its last consolation, what

have you accomplished? have you substituted laws more pure, precepts more simple and more engaging? and have you secured to your converts present happiness while depriving them of future hope?"

"Where," said I, "is virtue to be found? Not in the gay haunts of splendour and revelry, whence contemplation is banished as an enemy to mirth, and where not to be depraved is not to be fashionable. We must not seek it in the lowly abodes of penury and ignorance; for poverty is as apt to debase the mind as riches are to corrupt it. Is virtue then the laboured production of learning alone? Alas, no; human pride too often renders human wisdom vain. The learned man, elevated on the cloud-capt heights of speculation, distracted by laborious investigation, and confused amidst a chaos of inexplicable theories, becomes morose, opinionated, and fastidious; while speculating upon virtue, he neglects the performance of it, and wastes that time in thinking for

others which ought to be employed in instructing himself. Too proud to enjoy life by common means, too theoretical to pursue virtue in the path that experience and common sense have pointed out, he bewilders himself with metaphysical intricacies and sceptical doubts; fancies that if he thinks differently from the rest of the world, he must necessarily think better, and that to mistake an obvious meaning is to discover a hidden truth. The moral philosopher, intent upon his pretty impossibilities, talks of the beauty of virtue, while deceiving a friend or laying snares for the innocent; and, satisfied with the grandeur of his theory, despises the minute detail of practice as below his genius."

"We must not," said Augustus, "condemn a thing as dangerous because it has been abused; the very food that sustains us, every blessing with which this world abounds, may be made an improper use of, and become so many means of des-

truction. Learning does not cause the evils of which you complain; the same mind that made an ill use of learning, would make as bad a use of ignorance. The metaphysical sceptic and the profligate unbeliever are in principle the same; but that one employs finer words to support his opinions and plausibly bewilders the understanding, while the other more daringly attacks the passions."

"You will confess, however," said I, "that the learned man can do most mischief: he reasons for those who are incapable of reasoning for themselves; he gives the result of his cogitations to those who eagerly grasp at opinions that free them from the troublesome restraints of conscience."

"Were learning," said Augustus, "to be employed only on one side of the question, then, indeed, its influence might be fatal: but if vice has sometimes a specious support in the imposing subtleties of the unbeliever, what able and eloquent

champions in the cause of religion has learning produced. The man who is merely good may fill a private station with respectability and happiness; the man who is merely learned may astonish and instruct: but both must be united in him who would support with dignity the high and important character of a minister of God. He must not alone believe himself, but he must be capable of instilling that belief into others: he must anticipate doubts, in order to confute them, and be acquainted with every argument of the unbeliever and every subtlety of the philosopher. Flattery must be a stranger to his tongue, and ambition unknown to his heart."

"Happy," said I, "would it be for the interests of religion, if we saw this picture more generally realized: but look round and observe the manners of the clergy in general; where do we see so much pride, so much ostentation, such avaricious love of every thing belonging to this world,

and such marked neglect of every thing concerned with the next? If we seek for piety and zeal, we discover nothing but an intolerant and gloomy enthusiasm, while liberality is the companion only of levity and negligence. To speak well is considered of more importance than to live well; they "strut and fret their hour," forgetting that example is more powerful than precept, and that private advice, when given by one whose sincerity cannot be doubted and whose zeal seems the natural overflowings of a kind and benevolent heart, is more useful than the most laboured public exhortations, though graced with all the powers of rhetoric. Eloquence is certainly a brilliant and noble gift; no one can deny or resist its influence: but if its effects are violent, they are also transient, and he knows little of the human heart who would hope to reform it by a burst of eloquence. No, it is by patient reiterated efforts, adapted to the particular temper and understanding

of the individual, that a lasting effect can be produced. We are too apt to be dazzled by words, and to fancy that the man who talks best must also live best: but the pulpit may be the scene of dramatic deception as well as the stage, and whether the orator strut in the buskin, or wave the sacerdotal lawn, the love of fame or the love of money may alone stimulate his exertions."

"What a touching picture," said Augustus, "is the life of a good clergyman, the friend, the comfort, the light of an entire parish; his influence boundless, for it is the influence of love, without which zeal offends and advice looks like impertinence. It enlists every sensibility and social affection on the side of virtue, making even the weakness of our nature instrumental in reforming us. It is in vain we would hope always to succeed by reasoning; human nature will be human nature still, and will reject conviction through pique and personal animosity:

but the language of love carries with it a charm which we neither can nor wish to resist; it persuades without the aid of argument, and is felt when reason could not be understood. Wisdom calculates, weighs, resolves, and is overthrown, and obstinacy forgets to ask why he is convinced. The first duty of a clergyman, therefore, is to make himself beloved. How many profligate characters do we see every day reformed by friendly exhortation; how many wavering minds, who knew their duty, but neglected its performance through indolence, are suddenly aroused by well-directed counsel. I have seen a general reformation in the conduct of a parish, and those who had forsaken the public worship of their God, and betrayed in private a total neglect of every moral duty, become examples of devotion and virtue by the affecting remonstrances and touching example of a good and judicious pastor."

"You have justly described," said I,

"what a clergyman ought to be, and what he may reasonably accomplish; but I cannot help lamenting that a profession so capable of doing good, should be so often disgraced by the vices and negligence of the clergy."

"It is a truth too obvious to be denied," said Augustus; "I shall not defend the unworthy through that mistaken zeal which confounds the profession and the professor, and which would uphold religion by countenancing the depravity of its ministers. The most odious and contemptible character on earth is a bad clergyman, and more service is done to the cause by that just reproof which may remind such people of their duty, than by that blind credulity, which, in linking the dignity of religion with the personal respectability of its ministers, leads us to acknowledge the one only so long as we can respect the other, and which fancies the wildest and most dangerous doctrine strictly orthodox because it comes from

the lips of the Lord's anointed! Too many enter the profession without bestowing one serious thought on the important and awful duties annexed to it; and when we investigate the motives of one half, we shall cease to wonder at their subsequent conduct. Every dunce, who, after stumbling through his college course, is found incapable of pursuing the more intricate studies of law or physic, disguises his stupidity in the demure air of a parson, and without understanding or dignity to support the cause he espouses, bewilders the ignorant and disgusts the wise. Educated in the vices and luxuries of high life, many enter orders to secure an hereditary living. Ridiculing religion, and glorying in depravity, the only vice they do not practise is hypocrisy. Others enter the church in a gloomy fit of religious frenzy, and make the cause odious by sullen virtue and ferocious sanctity. Insulting the Deity, by limiting his mercy, employing invective instead of persuasion, those

high church demagogues wear out life in useless controversy, more intent upon the forms than the duties of religion. We see mean fawning sycophants, who depend upon the pliability of their dispositions for preferment, bend the abject knee to power, and stimulate by applause the errors and follies which it is their duty to check. Ignorant of the principles of their faith, but clamorous for the church establishment, they would be Mahometans had Mahomet the gift of a mitre. Many causes conspire to render even the most amiable and best intentioned clergyman unpopular; their means are often too circumscribed to enable them to purchase praise from those who know of no other virtue but hospitality, and can discover no excellence but over a bottle of claret. Advice is seldom well received even from the rich and powerful, and many call it an insult to be reminded of their duty, who would be foremost in accusing their pastor of neglect if he desisted from the vain effort."

The opinions of Augustus always leaned to the side of mercy; his calm, superior mind viewed the actions of his fellow-creatures with candour and impartiality; he could see merit in an enemy, and never expected perfection in a friend. Unwarped by prejudice, unmoved by passion, reason ruled his heart, sincerity his tongue. He had read much, but had thought still more than he had read, and his remarks were an instructive commentary on the works of philosophers.

"On entering life," said he, "the pictures of your mind were an exaggerated imitation of nature; your coloring too vivid, allowing no light and shade: it was all one broad glare of dazzling perfection; you found or fancied yourself disappointed, and suddenly running from one extreme to another, from being an idolator you became a sceptic, and having no longer a pretext to be eloquent in eulogy, resolved to be pointed in invective. You mistook in Matilda a general desire to

please for a particular effort to attract yourself. That which we ardently hope we soon bring ourselves to believe; for though man deceives man, the heart more frequently deceives itself. Banishing every intermediate feeling between perfect indifference and violent love, as you had conquered the former, you fondly persuaded yourself that the latter was all your own. Misery now makes part of your dream of happiness; you grasp the fleeting shadow of your sorrows, and expect the world to pity sufferings that are prolonged only by the hope of its sympathy."

My friend urged me to try a change of scene and of society. "The capital," said he, "has been called the hot-bed of vice, and though human nature is the same in all climes and regions, some soils may be more congenial than others to the growth of virtue."

He talked of rural life, its calm delight, its simple pleasures; he at once touched

my heart and awakened its enthusiasm. Anticipation is the bliss of life! it creates a fairy world of hope, and urges to those efforts which ultimately make us blessed; that ever restless and eager spirit which strides towards futurity, proclaims our destination. It is the silent testimony of eternity.

CHAP. VIII.

FULL of new hopes I directed my course far from the poisonous atmosphere of London. Shenstone, Thomson, every poet who tuned the doric reed and sung of rural life, were my companions; every breeze wafted odours; spring unfolded all its beauties to my charmed eye, its refreshing showers unlocked those balmy exhalations which seemed rising to offer the pure incense of nature at the throne of the Creator. Oh, what a scene was this for happiness! my spirits, light as the air I breathed, were in unison with the cheerful scenes around. Creative fancy struck her magic lyre and gave to every thing the language of romance: the weary peasant, propped upon his spade, gazing with vacant eye at the splendid retinue of wealth, was transformed into a rural Stre-

phon, "composing sonnets to his mistress's eyebrow;" every cottage was a Paradise, every woman an angel; a Cincinnatus followed every plough, and I was for a moment a Philanthropist.

The country in which I fixed my residence was delightfully picturesque, inviting to contemplation and solitude; but I resolved to follow the advice of Augustus and mix in society. "You will, by doing so," said he, "render your hours of retirement more sweet, you will lay in a store of observation for the employment of your reasoning faculties and the developement of taste and genius. Solitude engenders gloomy discontent, or nourishes hopes and expectations that end in disappointment; its conclusions are speculative, often erroneous, always extravagant. The solitary man expects too much from the world: never satisfied with his fellow-creatures as they are, nor watchful to be himself what he ought, he raises an ideal model of perfection, and then quarrels

with mankind because they are what nature made them.

"Yet it is not by being for ever in a crowd that a just knowledge of the world is acquired. Look at the man of pleasure, who spends his life in the dull routine of polite amusements: he is profoundly ignorant of mankind; the forms and etiquettes of society equalize manners, and by manners alone his judgment is formed. Too much occupied to study the various and complicated movements of the human mind, he feels *self-interest* the moving principle within, and reduces the motives of his fellow-creatures to the same standard. Occasional retirement is that salutary rest to the mind which sleep is to the body; like the vicissitudes of summer and winter, each is a preparation for the other. Society corrects the dangerous wanderings of the heart, while solitude refines the calculations of the head, warms and animates the cold deductions of cautious experience, and gives to worldly prudence the

graceful enthusiasm of romance. The powers are unfolded in society, matured in solitude; in the one we act, in the other we think: in a word, society has claims on every individual, and solitude should be employed but as means of fulfilling those claims."

A heart possessed of the smallest sensibility, will feel a sensation of calm delight while contemplating a beautiful village; but when harassed by the tumultuous scenes of public life, wearied by its disappointments, and seeking rest in the bosom of innocence, oh, what delightful anticipations does such a prospect give birth to! Its romantic seclusion, the gay prospect of its woodbine cottages and cultivated gardens, the church, the hill, the river, the union of a thousand simple objects, combining to give life and interest to the whole, fill the heart with that still and plaintive serenity, sweeter than joy and far more lasting. Imagination soon peoples this fairy land with creatures of

its own; we fancy a whole neighbourhood united by the most cordial good will; no clashing of interest, no schemes of ambition, no turbulent passions to interrupt the gay tranquillity of their simple and rural lives; their pleasures untainted by vanity, and their intercourse unmixed with suspicion and deceit. We see no reason why simplicity may not be united with elegance, why the refinements of polished society may not be acquired without its vices; and we look round for the realization of our hopes; but, alas, the country is no longer the seat of peaceful innocence; vice is now mistaken for fashion, and a contempt for rational pleasures discovers a knowledge of the world and a cultivated taste. Insulting the Creator, and ridiculing the created, villagers unite the profligacy of refinement with the narrow prejudices of ignorance. What plots, what party business, what cabinet intrigue in every country town! The politics of Europe are not more intricate. Every

family carries on a war defensive or offensive: they have their spies and their whisperers, and they smile and hate and flatter and undermine with the most courtly ease. Vanity aspires to the highest seat at a feast, contends for it with polite impertinence, and forfeits respect by the very effort to obtain it. Envy lights her torch at beauty's eye, and the rival fair-ones copy, while they decry her air, her dress, and her conversation. Here we see love make the clown an antic; he talks of his mistress Angelina instead of his horse Matchless, and seeks her in the grove where he formerly sought a fox. The pedant adjusts his locks, essays an awkward merriment; with the language of science, attempts the effusions of the heart, and fancies the laugh raised at his folly is a tribute to his wit! All those passions that disgrace the senate make the village ridiculous; the obstinate struggle for power, the well-cloaked job, the adoption of one opinion because a rival has adopted

another, and the welfare of the many sacrificed to the interest of a few.

Thus we see those little spots which nature seems to have created for calm repose, torn with contention; and those who should be elevated above the little motives of envy and personal animosity, spread through an entire neighbourhood the discontent that corrodes their own hearts, and foment those disturbancies which their very names ought to quell. Much might be done in the cause of virtue, in the promotion of unanimity, and the diffusion of happiness, by that influence which rank and talent, when judiciously employed, never fail to bestow. But respect must be won, not exacted: he who ostentatiously proclaims his own importance, insults when he ought to conciliate, and makes the dignity of his situation a striking contrast to the littleness of mind that could stoop so low as to remind us of it. Humility exalts the man, arrogance debases situation. True dignity

is never ostentatious; it is neither petulant nor tyrannical, and requires no stage-effect to display itself. It can stoop to inferiors, without assuming the insulting airs of patronage, and perform acts of private charity and public spirit, without motives of personal exaltation. The little mind exacts applause; the great mind is satisfied with deserving it: the one quotes the example of some fool of quality, and consults self-interest alone; the other considers whether honest men will approve, and makes conscience his ultimatum. He disdains to be the tool of a great man's ambition, and smiles at the artifices of the whisperer and parasite, convinced that he who commits himself to their guidance, betrays either a weak head or a designing heart, and that their influence, once admitted, assumes despotic sway; while the victim of their malicious interference is betrayed from credulity into injustice, is taught to resent imaginary wrongs, to insult without cause, oppose without rea-

son, and become a ridiculous actor in scenes where caprice is motive and passion argument. Our forefathers kept *fools* for the entertainment of their friends; our great men now perform that part themselves, and prefer a *knave* for their private instruction; under whose auspicious influence they gradually unite in their own proper persons the qualities of both!

Half the discontents which divide society are occasioned by that fatal promptitude to believe every tale that malice or gossipping garrulity invents. Those pests of society, those petty fomentors of village vexations are caressed and applauded, called the best creatures in the world, the most zealous friends, because they supply curiosity with scandal and malignity with excuses for hatred. The private history of one family is made a passport to another, who are in turn betrayed to their next-door neighbour. But, as whisperers derive their little importance, or perhaps their daily bread from the recital of anec-

dote and the diffusion of scandal, when truth does not supply the memory; necessity draws upon the imagination. Thus falsehoods are propagated, and characters traduced. The most scandalous story, when introduced with a deprecatory appeal to Heaven, and drawled out with a pious reflection upon the depravity of the age, is never called satire. Oh no, *wit* alone is satire; it is a matter of no importance when innocence is blasted and friendship betrayed; so long as defamers are dull, they are called innocent!

I endeavoured, on entering this new circle, to avoid forming too hasty a judgement of their characters. This, however, was difficult. We are apt to be biassed by the opinions of our first intimates, and of course trust to the chances of prejudice, ignorance, or ill-nature. We should, however, give society a fair trial, and wait patiently the time when characters must unfold themselves. To judge by the conversation of any one class, I

should have supposed all the rest unworthy of my acquaintance; but when time and personal experience allowed me to compare evidence, I saw how apt we are to form general conclusions of character from private causes of dislike; that the error of a moment is magnified into an inherent and radical fault, while a salute unreturned, or a visit neglected, stamps a character with more obloquy than immorality or deceit. As the best cannot hope to escape uncensured, so the worst have their eulogists; and the character that is held up in one company as a model for all men to imitate, in another is loaded with epithets of contempt and abhorrence. Both cannot be true: let us then trace each opinion to its source, and we shall discover that personal feelings and self-interest dictate both the praise and the censure. A man is a villain because his interests clash with ours: but let the circumstances be altered, let fortune unexpectedly raise him to an eminence, and give him the power

of contributing to our advancement or pleasures, a new light suddenly darts into our minds and dazzles us with a view of virtues till then unseen. Profligacy is then a taste for polite amusements, extravagance becomes generosity, insincerity is a knowledge of the world, the supercilious pomp of a little mind is called the dignity of a great one, and even folly itself is overlooked though it cannot be palliated.

How seldom are the charms of rural life, the cheering scenes of pastoral simplicity, enjoyed. They are despised, because they can be purchased without cost; and the senseless votaries of fashion, who have not hearts capable of enjoying refined pleasures, yawn away their time in gloomy pomp, and without ever attempting to be happy, wear out life in the most animated efforts to persuade the world that they are superlatively so! Thus society degenerates into a tasteless interchange of unvalued ceremonies, occupy-

ing time, without touching the heart or improving the understanding. Social intercourse is now a supplement to pride, not the kind interchange of benevolence. A pitiful emulation expels happiness, and a suspicious caution chains the tongue of candour, chills the heart of feeling; while that man is called prudent who never speaks his sentiments, that man wise who never differs from the great, and that man good-natured whose indiscriminating suavity bows alike to merit and insignificance, to virtue and vice. Smiles are banished, as indications of vulgar content; it is for the humble and insignificant alone to be careless and cheerful, but high minded station, when it cannot be respected for its wisdom, must at least give to folly all the chilling dignity of a dismal countenance. Happy thus to keep mankind at a distance, (since, by doing so, they can alone escape the depressing sensation of intellectual inferiority,) and mistaking the distance of dislike for the awfulness of res-

pect, their vanity is solaced; and thus the very punishment of their fault contributes to its continuance! Blind to merit, and careless of happiness, all their sensibilities absorbed in pride, their intimacies are regulated by one rule alone. It is not, "Are such and such people amiable or instructive?" It is, "Will they reflect honor on me by their rank, or are they mean enough to supply me with flattery and scandal?" But the insulting favours of ostentation are received without gratitude, and partaken without enjoyment. Certainly the society of the country might be the most agreeable in the world, if people thought half as much of enjoyment as they do of parade. In a city, conversation is confined to the common-place topics of the day, which require neither energy of mind nor play of fancy. Those who fill the splendid saloon, and glitter in every scene of vanity, flock thither, not with expectations of happiness, but as a refuge from misery; not so much to meet others,

as to escape from themselves. They have nothing to interest the affections, nothing to rouse the benevolent and social feelings; they discover no virtues in each other, and make no other distinctions but the externals of dress and address; they converse without interest, smile without pleasure, meet with indifference, and part without regret.

But the country affords a very different picture: there is always some pursuit to interest the mind, some impulse to give energy to the character; all are united by some tie, either of interest or friendship, of hope or fear. The circle in which they move is the whole world to them: every meeting is a little drama, where each individual supports a part and forms one of the Dramatis Personæ of the plot. In a city every man adopts the common-place opinions of his associates, adjusts his mind by the rules of fashion, learns to reason in a coffee-house and declaims in a circle of belles. But in the country, deprived

of the constant recurrence of little events, when every thing conspires to give a sober contemplative turn, the mind seeks employment within itself, and judges with a degree of accuracy and strength seldom attained amidst the fooleries of a gay life or the splendour of a great one. It is a situation peculiarly adapted to the developement of character. Though the circle is more confined in the country, there is an originality of character which compensates for a more enlarged field of speculation; for a few well observed, is better than a multitude who pass like puppets before us. Perhaps no character on earth is more capable of enjoying true happiness, of attaining to wisdom and virtue, than the country gentleman, who divides his time between rural occupations and liberal studies; who sets that value on the opinion of the world which is one of our immediate protections against evil, yet despises it enough to secure him from being the victim of example and the slave

of prejudice; who spends his fortune in acts of benevolent hospitality; not that hospitality which starves the poor to feed the rich, nor yet that glittering hospitality whose object is to eclipse an enemy, not to gratify a friend. Such I have seen, and, in proportion as they are scarce, they are valuable.

CHAP. IX.

My fortune made me a very tempting prize to all the speculating beauties in the country; but my vanity was not flattered by believing myself the object of their hopes; for I was courted ere known, and while they laid snares for my heart, their own were invulnerable but to a golden arrow. How few are united in the silken fetters wove by love and reason! how few are happy in marriage, and how few enter it from motives to make them so. The blooming bride, arrayed in Asiatic splendour, descends from the brilliant equipage for which she bartered happiness; no cheerful home awaits her, no social joys, no confidential converse wing away the time; all is chill indifference or gloomy discontent. 'Tis true she sparkles in

public, is gazed at and envied; but with what years of suffering is the momentary indulgence of vanity purchased! Condemned to the wearisome society of a man she dislikes, harassed by the eternal necessity of dissembling her feelings, she loses the vivacity of mind which gave a relish for gay pleasures, and soon looks with indifference on the gay pageantries of wealth which habit renders common.

Splendour, wealth, honors, can you supply the inward peace which the heart will demand, though dazzled by your pomp? Can you console it for the absence of all those nameless consolations, those sources of inexhaustible content which mutual affection bestows? Let not the ambitious or dissipated ridicule a passion they can never feel; it ennobles the nature, even after its influence is passed; and the heart that truly loves has approached one degree nearer perfection! Love does not alone determine the happiness of our lives, but often our moral and intellectual character,

and in the choice we make lies its power of either exalting or debasing our nature.

If our affections are placed on one whom we do not esteem, and whom we contemplate without discovering any of those sentiments which inspire us with virtuous ambition, we soon cease to value in ourselves what she does not consider valuable. We feel that those principles which hitherto we deemed noble, those acquirements that cost us labour to attain, are either despised by her as useless, or are viewed with a degree of awe and terror more likely to create obstacles to the success of our passion than to inspire a reciprocal sentiment. Then the heart shrinks from its own applause; we feel our powers cramped, our sentiments debased; we endeavour to forget that there are virtues of which she is ignorant, and that nature and education fitted us for a higher sphere of action than to be the ignoble puppet of a frivolous woman, whose judgement is decided by a bow, and whose es-

teem depends upon the elegance of our dress and facility of our compliments.

We insensibly steal into the sentiments of her whom we love; we contract her tastes and habits; our likings and dislikes are directed by hers; and from loving the object, we soon learn to think, act, and feel with her. We do not ourselves discover the effect of her influence, and probably would despise ourselves for the degrading subserviency; but the illusion which transforms us, renders us blind to the change. A lover does not affect the sentiments of his mistress, he actually imbibes them; he does not copy, but he assimilates: no prejudice is proof against her persuasions; and that which would be deemed ridiculous or improper in another, appears in her so amiable as to be adopted as the rule of a lover's life. Thus she can transform the noblest nature into the vilest, can instil the most destructive principles, and eradicate every elevated and virtuous sentiment: all this she may

achieve without intending the mischief; she may undermine her lover's principles, and render him wicked and depraved, while she herself is indulging but the thoughtless levity of youth; and though she would shudder at being the champion of vice, she is gradually rendering it familiar to his mind by the lightness of her sentiments, the ridicule which she attaches to every moral character, and the flattering epithets of spirit, elegance, fashion, &c. which she bestows on those whose lives have been most notoriously profligate.

The human mind is ever fluctuating between good and evil; if it is not aspiring towards excellence, it is sinking to debasement, and it requires a constant and active incitement to counteract its natural propensity towards evil. If, then, we pass our lives in the society of those who neither practise themselves, nor value in others the strict principles of morality and religion; who sneer virtue out of countenance, by coupling it with insipidity and

meanness; who render vice familiar by example, and agreeable by the decorations of wit and the blandishments of flattery; and who fix the attention solely on worldly motives and rewards;—alas! where is the heart so noble, so elevated, so free from human passion and human weakness, as to resist the contagion? Virtue is seldom the foundation of our attachments; and yet the future honor of our lives, our eternal as well as temporal happiness, often depend upon the principles of a companion chosen in the hey-day of juvenile giddiness, when a momentary caprice of fancy is mistaken for love.

We too often form our attachments on some trifling coincidence of taste or pursuit, from having enjoyed together some particular pleasure; which, however, owed none of its charms to the exclusive participation of an individual. Associated by circumstances, we yield our affections to an object whose only charm is proximity, and because we were once

happy together, fancy we could never be happy asunder. The little simpering miss, who whiled away our vacant hours in the country, who romped with us when politics were exhauted, and whose untutored vivacity looked like artless *naïveté* and originality, might expel ennui and create a momentary interest in solitude; but those qualities which peculiar circumstances alone unfold, vanish with a change of situation and form no solid ground of attachment. That which is esteemed agreeable or beautiful when contrasted with downright dullness or deformity, should be viewed in some other theatre of representation before a just opinion can be formed. Half the world, mistaking habit for affection, become lovers through idleness, and then, persuaded that fate has ordained it, marry and are miserable for life!

From the system of education now adopted, the females of the present day are not likely to stamp a very dignified

character on the young men whom they influence; they are so frivolous, vain, and superficial, so zealous in the pursuit of a splendid establishment, that their hearts are insensible to merit, and any titled profligate or wealthy fool is certain of being preferred before the most exalted character. I should be sorry to see female education confined to cookery and tent stitch; but I observe with regret the valuable time that is wasted in acquiring a variety of superficial accomplishments, while the culture of the mind, which alone can render woman permanently pleasing and useful in society, is neglected. It is true the ephemeral productions of the day are universally read by females: but this is all very superficial; they read enough to set them talking, but they are as far from knowing how to think as if they had never opened a book. Accomplishment is now so much the mania of the day, that we see the daughters of the humblest mechanic studying the ornamental instead of the

useful branches of female education. The most miserable shop in the suburbs of the city resounds with the din of an old harpsichord, the embroidery-frame litters the miserable counter, the shop is hung with birds, beasts, and flowers, painted by Miss Dolly or Miss Nancy, while she herself reclines amidst volumes of romances, the fatal personification of her studies, which begin in mistake and end in ruin!

However, the abuse of a thing is no argument against it. There are some who will not allow their daughters to learn music, because, they say, it occupies too much time and withdraws their attention from more useful employments. Before they give this reason, let them consider if two or three hours in the day are not lavished on more frivolous pursuits. It were well could we catch each flying moment, and load its wing with deeds of immortality: but while young ladies are working trimmings that are out of fashion before they are out of the

embroidery-frame, making card-racks and fire-skreens, and sticking gold-paper upon eggshells to ornament the chimney, their fingers might be just as usefully employed

"Untwisting all the chains that tie
"The hidden soul of harmony."

I expected some pleasure at the house of Mr. D——, a gentleman of large fortune, with three beautiful daughters, of whose elegance and accomplishments fame spoke very loudly. They were celebrated musicians, and to me, who am an idolator of that charming art, no other attraction was necessary. Music is no solitary acquirement, which, proudly all-sufficient to itself, renders the possessor careless and incapable of pleasing.

These young ladies, returning home with all the ignorance and affectation of a boarding-school, are considered prodigies of musical talent, because they can

with unblushing effrontery and unfeeling rapidity gabble over an Italian bravura, closing their eyes, shrugging their shoulders, and employing the appoggiatura till it degenerates into a groan. Sweet powers of harmony, how are you insulted! The Miss D——s sung and simpered, played the tambourine, and put themselves into the most graceful attidudes; exhibited a thousand pretty childish airs, all those

"Quips and quirks, and wanton wiles,
"Nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,"

so easily acquired from a fashionable governess or copied from a second-rate actress.

The tedious display of accomplishments over, I endeavoured to discover the yet hidden treasure of mind. I first introduced common topics, that I should not alarm them by too exalted an opinion of my wisdom, and check that natural flow of thought which is woman's sweetest

charm. On the subjects of balls, dress, and scandal, they were loquacious and animated; but their animation was without any play of fancy: they had all the surface of refinement, but wanted that inherent elegance which charms by unstudied graces, and diffuses through the manners a calm, collected, winning ease. Their conversation was made up of the cant of science and the jargon of romance, and I soon found that the range of their literary pursuits was confined to those fictions which soften without instructing the heart, those works of imagination, which, like the prismatic glass, shew objects glowing with false but brilliant colors: and that to their dazzled eyes the sober page of reason was never unfolded.

Though I do not agree with those sage moralists who have endeavoured to prove all novel reading destructive and all novel writers contemptible, I believe that, were a fair estimate made of the comparative good and evil which novels have done to so-

ciety, we should find the evil predominate. They create a distaste for the sober pleasures of life; they describe love and hatred in such extravagant terms, that the temperate feelings of nature appear insipid, they display such models of impracticable perfectibility, that we turn in despair from the imitation; and they paint vicious characters in such alluring colors, that we forget their errors in contemplation of their brilliant and engaging qualities. To support the consistency of characters, they are made to utter the most dangerous sentiments. The author does not perhaps wish to inculcate those sentiments, but a long train of events and arguments are not always able to do away the impression of one false but ingenious maxim, as few minds are capable of following or comprehending the laboured combinations of little results with which the author fancies he overthrows it. Thus the sentiment which probably was introduced only to be confuted, will be engraven on

the memory to create bad actions or to excuse them.

A mind that has long followed fiction through her flowery mazes, is little inclined to pursue the plain unadorned path of reason. Thus the understanding lies dormant, while imagination roves uncontrolled, and the genuine sympathies of nature, the best feelings of the heart, are exhausted on fictitious woes. Thanks to the taste and genius of the present day, every circulating-library supplies elopements, catastrophes, mystery and distraction, distressed damsels and invincible heroes, in such abundance, that terror has ceased to tremble and wonder has ceased to stare. The softest hearts have expended their stock of sympathy, and the most weeping eyes can no longer produce one tear even for domestic calamities. Every boarding-school miss has learned to act the heroine, to create adventures, and then weep at them; to unbind her golden tresses, fix her eyes upon the moon, and

sigh forth her sorrows in tripping Madrigals. Intricate incident, astonishing discoveries, hopeless misery, and felicity more perfect than that of angels; sulky heroines, who are perfect in the arts of blushing, scolding, and looking disdainful; sophistical heroes, who sentimentally break the Ten Commandments, and then sanctify every immorality by proving themselves men of their word; sighs, blushes, thrilling sensibility and uncontrollable emotions, with a little pert dialogue interlarded with French phrases, constitute the whole art of modern story-telling.

A story often passes off a bad work, and as often degrades a good one: it will always please those who are incapable of comprehending a higher order of writing, and though it may not be valued by every class of readers, it will at least be understood by all. But if a book has no other merit than incident, it cannot please the wise, and if an author is capable of dig-

nifying incident, who can forbear lamenting that such valuable time and talents should be wasted on the soliloquies of some moon-stricken lover or sentimental martyr to parental authority.

Most people open a book for the same reason that Turks chew opium; it acts as a momentary stimulant, and lulls the mind into temporary forgetfulness of its own cares. But as the merit of an author is measured by the reader's capability of comprehending him, a work that is too sublime for a little mind, too delicate for a vulgar one, stands a chance of being accused of dullness by more than one half of its readers. The world teems with beings, who, though possessed of abilities which might, if judiciously called forth, prove a source of instruction and delight to society, for want of early excitation sullenly resign themselves to insignificance, and plod indolently through life without any motive but to beguile the passing hour, satisfied to be thought con-

temptible provided they are acknowledged inoffensive; who consider every exertion of reason an unprofitable occupation, and who ask nothing from Heaven but an easy sofa, a full glass, and a companion, who will neither talk too much nor too well. Peace be with them! may they long enjoy that rest which they so ardently solicit; and may all authors who toil for the applause of the wise and the discriminating, be for ever unstigmatized by the odium of their approbation.

The novelty of the scenes in which I was placed, the opportunity for observation which a variety of new characters afforded, for a while amused me. But the heart demands more. I soon became languid and absent in the midst of gaiety, and immersed in painful reverie when the claims of society demanded the exertion of my talents towards the general amusement. No man has a right to retire within himself, and in the security of silence watch the unguarded. A reserved

and suspicious disposition can never form a fair estimate of characters; every heart shrinks in cautious reserve at his approach; he communicates the coldness that he feels; first creates the crime, and then punishes it.

Were I permitted to fill that place in society which others do, and to pass through life in tranquil insignificance, I might possibly be happy; but having been unfortunately convicted of learning and talent, I was isolated from all intercourse of the heart, and forced to listen to the laboured nothings of those who think it an insult to talk the language of nature to a genius. Every word I uttered was weighed with critical accuracy; I was therefore obliged to consider well before I spoke: nor could I venture to express what the vivacity of natural feeling dictated, for fear of committing myself to an opinion, and of hearing that bandied about from tongue to tongue as a fixed and unalterable maxim, which was uttered without consi-

deration and forgotten by myself the next moment. Did I attempt to impart that cheerfulness to others which sometimes my own heart enjoyed, it was called an artful trap to betray the unwary and to lead others into folly by shewing them the example. Alas! how little do they know this heart of mine, who would entrammel it with those splendid fetters; this heart, that sighs but for peace, and asks no other honors but to be esteemed by the virtuous.

I have passed through many scenes of life; I have seen much to admire and more to condemn; I have known many of the learned, many who thought themselves profound, and some few who were really so; I have listened, wondered, looked excessively intelligent, felt that it was all very fine, and perhaps useful too if seasonably introduced: but those in whose society I have passed my happiest moments, whom I have truly loved and esteemed, pleased less by their talents

than their virtues, less by the acquirement of learning than the genuine feelings of nature; and I have gained more instruction from the hearts of some than from the heads of others. Is it that nature, in bestowing any dazzling or valuable acquisition, has wisely annexed to it some corrective, some evil to counterbalance its intoxicating effects. Oh, nature, if such be thy laws, withdraw this treacherous gift: give to others that dangerous emulation which draws upon us the voice of calumny and the sneer of envy, which makes our virtues depressed and our imperfections blazoned; but leave to me the sober content of mediocrity!

CHAP. X.

I LOOKED forward with some expectation of pleasure to the arrival of Sir William G——'s family in the country, who were related to Augustus, and of whom I had heard enough to make me expect a valuable acquisition. Immediately on their arrival I paid my respects, and was received with easy politeness, accompanied by a certain air of dignity that inspired more respect than fear. I clearly saw that they were not people who profess a violent friendship for every new acquaintance, that their approbation was not indiscriminately lavished, and was gained neither by rank nor title, but by merit alone.

Those who make it a point to "shine on all alike," betray great stupidity or

great hypocrisy, and by levelling the distinctions between the insignificant and meritorious, leave no motive for noble emulation. If the undeserving are caressed and applauded; if they are spoken of with respect and courted with assiduity; if crimes are palliated and softened down with a decorous decency of language, and disgraceful vices dressed up in the elegant garb of fashionable levity, I would not call it good-nature, but injustice; it is countenancing vice and robbing virtue of its reward. Many find it their interest to level those nice distinctions, and by leaning lightly on the errors of others, expect to be paid back in kind, and to practise with impunity what they judge with lenity. This dangerous and unjust liberality often proceeds from the pitiful ambition of a little mind, that would sacrifice good taste and sincerity in order to obtain popularity: but universal praise is unattainable, the qualities prized by one class are dreaded or despised by another, and the noblest

are least understood or most likely to create envy. Who would seek popularity, even were it attainable? The severest satire is the eulogy of a fool!

I heard with indescribable pleasure that my friend Augustus was shortly expected to Castle G——. With what pleasure I anticipated our mutual enquiries and communications! To him I could freely unburthen my heart, soothed by his sympathy and strengthened by his reason. These thoughts delightfully occupied me. I stored my memory with observations; I studied every thing, and felt my powers of reasoning unfold with my confidence in the reception my remarks would meet. Who has not felt that the approbation of the auditor creates new talent in the speaker?

He came, and I for a moment forgot my friend in contemplating the lovely creature who accompanied him. I had heard much of Julia, lady G's sister, and expected her arrival; but supposing that

I should behold a mere beauty, my heart was prepared to meet her with coldness and distrust. I now paused to examine a face and air so new, so original, and so striking, that I totally forgot to consider whether she was beautiful according to the rules of art. But I felt that she possessed that which is the best test of beauty, the power of prepossessing the beholder in her favor at the first glance, and of diffusing pleasure and complacency around. I know not how to describe her; her beauty depends so much more on character and expression, than on the accuracy of each separate feature. She was not a heroine. She had nothing of Grecian languor or Roman dignity about her. She carried no aweful denunciations in her eye; no celestial reveries withdrew her from sublunary enjoyment; no fastidious sentimentality taught her to mistake rudeness for dignity. It was her mind which gave the last indefineable finishing to a face and figure of uncommon loveliness. Hers was

the beauty of sentiment. The nameless graces of conversation, the glance of genius, the soft, the brilliant, the ever-varying charms of vivacity and feeling; these were hers. In mere personal beauty she may be excelled; but I never saw a woman who would not appear lifeless and uninteresting when compared with the fascinating Julia.

Augustus soon observed the effect which her uncommon powers of pleasing produced, and he formed a hope that the charms of his fair cousin would obliterate the traces of an unfortunate attachment. But while charmed by the polished vivacity of her manners, her artless sensibility and cultivated understanding, though I felt that, in her presence, my talents were unfolded and that her approbation formed my highest felicity,—though, in a word, she filled my soul with the most cheering reflections, and gave motive to every exertion, I still recalled the beauteous image of my pensive and interesting Matilda,

and fancied that to forget her would be to profane love's altar; and to render myself for ever unworthy the smiles of beauty. "No, no," said I, "I have loved with enthusiasm; with delicacy, and more than human constancy; let me not then relinquish the extatic reveries, the sweet and cherished sorrows which Petrarch felt and sung for the rational but vulgar felicity of a second and successful love."

"How many men," said Augustus, "sacrifice the happiness of their lives to chimerical notions of delicacy. You think inconstancy a crime; I think so too, if the passion be reciprocal, and if you endanger the happiness of a tender and confiding heart by transferring your affections. But what, in the name of common sense, is your object? You would be a second Petrarch! My good friend, first learn to be as good a poet, and then you may possibly give to romantic folly an air of interest and dignity. Now do you really think that this system of romantic ad-

herence to a first love is founded in reason? The thing is absurd and impracticable. Every boy, before he has attained the age of one-and-twenty, has been in love—no matter with whom; some milliner's apprentice, or schoolmaster's daughter, or country cousin; it is all alike, provided he can but fancy himself in love. The poor youth writes verses on her, if he can; and if he cannot, a volume of Moore's Poems supplies the deficiency; and he walks by moonlight, and he sighs with excessive assiduity and works himself into an extacy of despair. All this is vastly sentimental and pretty. Our Romeo, however, smartens up wonderfully in consequence of the exertions he makes to please; he lays aside his school-boy bashfulness and academic slouch; his understanding unfolds itself, his sentiments become refined, he feels a motive for exertion and an ambition to excel.

"Thus a first love, though itself a very foolish thing, is absolutely necessary to

fit a man for a second; and if a boy was not in love with twenty fools, he would not know how to value a woman of sense. The parting hour, however, draws near: the lover must return to his college, or his father's house; vows of fidelity, tears of agony are lavished with all proper liberality. But how soon a little acquaintance with other women obliterates the recollection of his rustic charmer, and convinces him that an immature judgment and romantic sensibility, though they may be in favor of the passion itself, are bad guides in the choice of an object.

"In the fervor of youthful romance, when your heart, sighing for captivity, sought an object on whom to lavish its exuberant sensibilities, your eye was caught by the beauty of Matilda, and you instantly resolved to be desperately in love: but let me ask you, what qualities had Matilda to fix the heart of a man of sense? In her society your intellectual faculties were dormant, and the noblest

feelings of your heart were repressed because they were not understood. She had no talents as a companion, could neither comment on the past, embellish the present, or inspire a new train of thought for the future. She was just good enough to be uninteresting, but not half good enough to be valuable. She was lovely, I confess; but beauty like her's soon loses its influence; it wants the fugitive graces, the indefineable attraction of a varying expression, which holds the gazer in delighted expectation, and excites an interest ever new and ever lively.

"Who, that has ever admired the works of nature, but must confess that the mere beauty of the landscape constituted but half its charms? Wood, water, mountain, vale, flung together in sweet confusion, harmonious chance, promiscuous regularity, borrow powerful aids from the glowing softness of the evening breeze, impregnated with aromatic perfumes; from the softened sounds of buzzing

insects, of birds, and bleating flocks; the colors on lifeless canvass may rival the tints of nature, prospect may for a while delight the eye; but these satisfy, refresh, and soothe the soul. Beauty that depends upon mere contour and color is the most ephemeral of nature's works; but that which is the result of inherent elegance, if it once pleases, pleases for ever; and time, which steals roses from the cheek of lifeless beauty, adds new charms to intellectual loveliness. The silent, languid, pensive girl, whose demure looks and timid accents gave a celestial character to an oval face and sleepy eyes, soon degenerates into an indolent woman, slovenly in person, sullen in temper, incapable of enjoying life herself, and careless of contributing to the happiness of others. Such, believe me, is the painful discovery which many a husband makes, when the interesting blush of youth begins to fade, and the fascinations of external beauty no longer prejudice the judgment. Then that

glance which once conveyed rapture to his heart, and seemed to discover the softness and sensibility of an angel, betrays the vacancy of ignorance or the disdainful apathy of pride; then the low and mellow voice becomes a drawling monotony, and the silence which was ascribed to modesty, is found to proceed from dulness.

"I have seen how life stagnates when the companion of home and solitude is not the repository of sentiment, the counsellor of the heart, the intellectual friend, as well as the idol of the imagination. Believe me, my friend, you deceive yourself if you suppose that you really loved Matilda: but you had long been enamoured of an ideal charmer, and you chose to enshrine it in Matilda's form; you loved, not what she was, but what your fancy painted her; you embodied a vision; you first deified an image, and then worshipped the idol of your own creating! Compare her with the captivating Julia. The most fastidious critics forget to criticise while they

are forced to acknowledge the influence of her charms, and prefer her artless animated air, the beaming intelligence of her eye, and pathetic sweetness of her countenance, to the tame and insipid regularity of a Matilda. In her is endless variety; gentleness assumes the touching expression of sensibility, and her most sportive sally discovers a pure heart and a correct taste. The charm that lurks in her smile and hangs upon her every word; the charm derived from a soul possessing all the graces of genius without its terrors; these are worthy to hold such a heart as yours in bondage.

"I would not attempt to argue any man into love, but I shall never despair of arguing a wise man out of a ridiculous prejudice. Lay your mind open to the reception of truth; you have dignity enough to acknowledge yourself convinced, and sense enough not to prefer the misery of your own creating to the happiness which friendly council may obtain for

you. Cultivate the society of Julia; her friendship, at least, will be a consolation; and time will convince you, better than I can, how false are those fastidious refinements which interrupt rational happiness; and how wrong we are to form, under the influence of passion, irrevocable determinations."

CHAP. XI.

As I was unfortunately suspected of being a man of literature, I found my acquaintance ardently solicited by a little coterie of village pedants, who, by using words of thundering sound, arguing dogmatically, and quoting the authority of books little read (because perhaps little worth reading), had persuaded the plain squires that they were prodigies of erudition. But how small did I find their pretensions. Pedantic precision, uninteresting solemnity, hard words, the cant of science, and an austerity of manner, that, by claiming the title of wisdom, draws odium and ridicule upon the name;—these are the qualifications necessary to be thought learned. To please is a study

below their ambition. What I understand by the art of conversation, was unknown in this society. Indefineable charm! that seizes on the imagination and convinces the understanding, while pedantry is arranging systems and logarithms, and drawing out all the heavy artillery of the brain, commanded by that most unskilful general — a cold heart! Playful fancy, that gives to trifles its own graces, and, by its happy embellishment, renders life an eternal novelty, is a talent so prized, that pedantry plays the awkward gambols of the elephant imitating the leopard, and mistaking insipidity for artlessness, folly for brilliancy, and far-fetched comparison for elegant embellishment, declaims for hours on—the anatomy of a fly.

These, then, are the oracles of taste, the terror of the multitude; yet they are prized only while unknown. Like Persian kings, they support dignity by obsurity and reserve, and are sure to sink to the

level of ordinary mortals when personal intercourse withdraws the mysterious veil in which policy envelops them. Yet how few, that boast of plain sense, are more rational creatures. They are so narrow-minded, so temporizing, so right, that they are always wrong! In short, such every-day characters, or rather beings, one meets every day with no characters at all. I should rather attempt to identify each drop of rain, and dignify it with a separate title and property, than be forced to describe those cold, narrow minds, who take shelter under that hacknied apology for stupidity—*good plain sense.*

"The man of genius," said Augustus, "is like a rich mine, which contains treasures mixed with useless dross. But though the character of plain sense does not contain its inexhaustible riches, it has nevertheless sterling value, and is marked with the stamp of currency."

Augustus mistook me, however, if he supposed I despised those who really pos-

sess plain sense. Oh no, for I have felt how insufficient are the flights of the soul, the dreams of an enthusiastic mind, to make the possessor happy. Like opium, they create an intoxicating delirium, but leave the mind languid and unfit for happiness. Plain sense is the staple commodity of the mind. Genius may be ranked among its useless luxuries. One is the steady orb that guides our course; the other a brilliant meteor, that dazzles and often misleads. Yet who can behold, without indignation, those dull and arrogant pretenders to the name of plain sense? It is the rallying point round which stupidity, with all its gloomy caution, for ever crowds. Coldness, that cannot feel—dullness, that cannot reason—pride, ignorance, and envy, all bless Heaven that they are not geniuses, and fancy that a dreary vacuity of mind, an incapability to comprehend anything great or feel any thing refined, gives them undeniable claims to plain sense. Slaves to

custom, they call every enquiry a doubt, every improvement a dangerous innovation, and fancy every prejudice sacred because it is hereditary. They accuse genius of self-sufficiency and arrogance; but have themselves all its faults, without its advantages: for which is better—the self-sufficiency, by which we gain instruction, or the sullen arrogance of little minds, who, stripping human nature of every embellishment that they do not themselves possess, leave it at last a poor, naked, shivering, pitiable object? Genius may have its evils, but who would silence the voice that pleads for immortal fame? Who, that could be great, would choose to be insignificant? How fatal would it be to wisdom and virtue, if those who have enlightened the world by their talents had listened to the suggestions of those cautious calculators, who waste the gay season of youth, hope, and enterprise, in averting dangers that may never arrive; who seek a possible evil, and shun the po

sitive good; who expect a snake to leap from every bush, tread the earth in expectation of a pitfal, and never lift their eyes to Heaven but to discover a storm!

To feel an ambition for excellence, is almost to have attained it; for the wish soon creates the power. But in eradicating the seeds of vanity, it is difficult to avoid destroying also that aspiring spirit which teaches youth to encounter much in order to achieve a little. Humility is no longer a virtue, when it interferes with the performance of active duties; and ambition is dangerous only when ill directed. Never yet was a great action performed by him who is eternally reminded of his own insignificance, who is taught to believe himself below his cotemporaries and incapable of rising above mediocrity. It is in vain that he feels within himself the powers of greatness, which urge him to assert his own importance and to grasp the crown of glory that hovers over his brow. He has been taught to call every effort

presumption, and the voice of prejudice soon silences the pleadings of infant genius.

Ambition, though the parent of many faults, is also the parent of every thing excellent and exalted. It discovers itself in various ways: it fills some minds with noble emulation, and excites to great deeds; but when, in early life, it has been ridiculed and repressed, then it degenerates into pitiful vanity, which solaces itself with low company, extravagance, and sensuality; which degrades the understanding, destroys the principles, and leads to every vice and every meanness. Education and early impressions can alone determine whether ambition will prove a blessing or a misfortune. It is an inherent passion in the human mind: it is strongest in great minds; it ought to be directed; it can never be extinguished!

In the company of literati I generally found those with whom I conversed so anxious to display their own talents, that

manufacture a machine to elucidate the mysteries interwoven with the wing of a gnat. He found it easier to anatomize a body than the human mind, and cared very little which was the most useful study; exhausted all the powers of his soul upon the "buzzing flutterer of an hour," or drudged in mortar like the laborious mechanic, less useful in practice, and much more unintelligible in theory.

Are we the wiser or the better for studying the height of a dome or the breadth of a pillar? No, the human mind is the noblest and most useful study—an edifice that bears the stamp of eternity, virtue the foundation, and learning but the scaffolding by which it is raised—an immortal structure, that reaches Heaven when the works of man lie mouldering in decay. Vain, arrogant, theoretically mad, nothing appeared physically impossible to him, who believed his genius could surmount all obstacles, subjugate the winds, the seas, the thunders of Heaven, and arrest

contrast to the serious habits of her husband.

How useless then are those laborious pursuits which stupify the intellects, without adding any ornament in place of that cheerfulness which is the soul of female attraction. To talk well, is not always to talk agreeably; and though the pompous phraseology and incontrovertible truism might become a pleader in a court of equity, yet from the tongue of woman, who ought to dispel gloom, not create it, all this solemn formula of words is but the resource of dullness, the last effort of conscious inferiority.

I spent some days with a gentleman, who, by endeavouring to persuade the world that he is very clever, has actually succeeded in believing it himself; and because he makes himself the constant topic of his own discourse, fancies that he is an object of universal interest. He could mix powders and elixirs, torture animals to discover their powers of feeling, and

laughable caricature of himself: it might almost have passed for a well acted piece of mimicry. Their little heads were crammed with technical phrases and pertinent answers, which passed for originality upon strangers, but which were merely the effect of memory. Provided they acquired a knowledge of any one science (no matter how useless, nor whether it withdrew them from the studies which fit a man for active life), the father was satisfied. To spend hours examining by what means a toy was set in motion, was called an investigating mind, and the boy considered a second Archimedes. A museum of flies bestowed immortal honors on another; his days were spent in adding to the collection, in discovering with a microscope a purple tint on the back of one, a grey speck on another, and arranging with learned accuracy their various classifications.

The father, delighted to have them considered prodigies while infants, to see

them astonish a circle by their flippant answers, to be able to say they knew more than other children of their age, forgot that this very knowledge would stupify their intellects, and, in the immediate gratification of his own vanity, he lost sight of the future welfare of his children. To encumber the memory, is not to unfold the understanding; it rather checks the progress of reason, by accustoming children to gabble words to which they can affix no meaning, and teaching them to rely solely upon books for their opinions. The human mind requires time to arrive at maturity; if forced, it is soon exhausted. I seldom heard of a prodigy at six years old that was not a dunce at thirty; and I always suspect that those who talk like men when they are children, will act like children when they are men. What a long train of useless studies arise in dismal array to chase the infant smile and blush of health. The glowing morn of life, the youthful fire of fancy and genius are

chilled by technical formality, rules are substituted for precepts, criticism for taste, and the cold atmosphere which science breathes round the soul of youth, nips the bud of feeling.

Every little miss of eight years old is now a botanist, a chemist, a linguist, a natural historian; she can discover the most undiscoverable phenomenon of inanimate nature, and parade her little stock of erudition with as much formality and confidence as the wisest pedagogue that ever read himself out of common sense and politeness.

I soon grew tired of argument without object, solemnity without wisdom, and insipidity without artlessness. Though a withered leaf or expiring butterfly supplied them with conversation for an entire day, it could not interest me for five minutes. Learned in things, but ignorant of mankind, they knew not how to adapt their information to the capacity or taste of those with whom they conversed, and

thought less of being agreeable than of appearing profound. They read, not to be wiser, happier, or better; but to be able to say, "I read this book:" and though they could repeat a fact out of every author, they acquired no ideas from any. Their trifling produced melancholy, their wisdom mirth.

How different was the society at Sir William G——'s. Literature refined, but did not occupy them; it fitted them for society, instead of withdrawing them from it; it shone through every word, gave an elegance to the commonest thought, and simplified the most profound and complex. In argument they sought *conviction*, not *victory*, and all felt more anxious to please than to astonish.

CHAP. XII.

Sir William possessed a beautiful villa on the romantic borders of ——— Lake, at which they proposed spending a few months, and kindly expressed a wish that Augustus and myself would accompany them to their voluntary banishment. Delightful was the journey! friendship banished the necessity of form; for the kindness of spirit that animated every heart, inspired a more refined politeness than all the unmeaning ceremonies which insincerity has established. We did not regularly set about being happy, nor sit silent for an hour, labouring some happy *bon mot* which should astonish for a minute. We were not ashamed of being pleased at trifles, nor amused at folly; nor pause to enquire whether the occasion was important enough to move our risibility.

Such caution may be necessary for those who doubt their own understandings. The fool attempts to look wise, while the philosopher trifles; as a rich man feels easy under a thread-bare coat, conscious that the world knows he could afford a better, while the man of suspected circumstances feels as if every spot on his clothes were stains on his character. I believe we did not consider all this at the time. We certainly did not converse for the edification of posterity, bewilder ourselves about the height of every mountain and mineralogy of every stream, nor spend half a day endeavouring to decypher the unintelligible characters on a tomb-stone. Nay, I am almost ashamed to acknowledge, that, during our journey, I did not once take out my tablets to note some solid observation and frighten my fellow-travellers into silence!

However, notwithstanding these omissions, I felt myself happy, and cared not whether it was according to the rules of pedants or heroes of romance. How sel-

dom is happiness found, and how seldom is she received as a friend. True wisdom would welcome the fickle goddess when she deigns to appear, and, satisfied when innocence follows in her train, pause not to ask the world if this be joy? Alas! is not happiness at best but an illusion of the senses? Bearing no established form, but varying according to age, climate, and disposition, unsought, she comes; ever flies, when pursued, and mocks the efforts of art. Wealth cannot purchase her smile, nor learning discover her retreat.

On the evening of the third day we embarked upon the lake, and caught the first view of that sweet retirement where busy fancy sketched scenes of peace and joy. The fervor of youthful feeling, meliorated by reason; the apathy of indifference, conquered by friendship; a placid resignation, a corrected hope, succeeded. I gazed upon the tranquil surface of the lake, nor thought of future storms. The goatherd's whistle and bleating flock, the distant hum

of a small hamlet, faintly died upon the still and balmy air. Nature seemed to repose in the bosom of content. "And what have I suffered," I exclaimed, "that thousands have not suffered before me? Did I act fairly by mankind, when I so severely judged them? Did I wish to discover excellence, or had I a heart capable of valuing it? Alas, no: I have been too fastidious, I rejected happiness in every shape, when it no longer appeared in the form of Matilda; and far better would it have been for me if that fatal light had never dawned upon my mind, which dazzled and then withdrew for ever, making darkness more dreadful. Return, ye balmy gales that usher in the spring; bear upon your wings the varied wood-notes! Soft showers, fragrant blossoms, let me again behold you; refresh the soul of one who sighs for rural quiet. I ask but one little corner of the universe, cool, verdant, secluded; there let me muse and read; let the memory of former happiness, the

days that are passed, steal across my soul, not to indulge in useless regrets, but to draw, from the varied scenes of life, sweet subjects of contemplation, instructive warnings and tender recollections. Let me learn candidly to compare the good and the evil of life, and teach my heart its best lesson—resignation."

It was a delightful reverie, for it pointed to happiness in perspective. Every wild throb of tumultuous care was hushed, and I already enjoyed the anticipated delights of futurity. Thought crowded after thought in rapid succession, and, like the glassy lake which, smooth and untouched, received into its bosom the brightness of the heavenly constellations, a sweet and tranquil composure pervaded every sense; while reason poured her thousand lights into my soul, and filled it with a fire as temperate as it was beautiful.

CHAP. XII.

I NOW entered on a new scene of existence. I became the inmate of a family, who, though they appeared in society adorned with all those qualities which captivate and delight, can never be justly estimated but by those who have known them in the endearing scenes of domestic life. They did not confine their talents and powers of pleasing to dazzle an admiring circle, and then return to a languid family party, fatigued, listless, and discontented. In all their various occupations, in every pursuit in which they engaged, domestic happiness was still the end they sought to attain; and they wisely judged, that, to keep the active powers of the mind in motion, to supply

it with new images and subjects, it is necessary to mix in society, even though that society might be inferior to what they would enjoy at home. The occasional restraint of ceremony gave a new charm to domestic freedom, and the tasteless, uninteresting conversation they were so often obliged to endure, gave each a higher relish for the society of the other.

If there is a situation immediately appointed by Providence for the enjoyment of perfect happiness, it is a well-regulated domestic society, possessing within themselves the powers of varying and giving interest to their occupations; where piety displays itself in the cheerful discharge of incumbent duties, and attunes every heart to harmony; not the narrow prejudice of sectarian intolerance, where grimace is piety and groaning penitence; not the wild speculations of enthusiasts, agitated by controversy, whose zeal for Heaven gives to their words the fury of demons—who, with conscientious wickedness, tor-

ture the obvious meaning of Scripture into doctrines at which piety and reason revolt—but guided by that pure and holy light discernible to the most uneducated peasant as well as learned prelate!

Convinced of those dignified and simple truths, those affecting precepts, which, rectifying, but not destroying the affections of the heart, give to power clemency, to wisdom the gentle graces of humility, and to every intercourse of life benevolence, justice, forbearance, and love. Lady G— united an understanding of almost masculine strength, to the gentlest, most feminine manners—a softness ever winning, a gaiety the most spontaneous and engaging. Young, lovely, accomplished, and benevolent, she passed her days in the tranquillity of innocence and the cheerfulness of hope; charitable in the most extended sense of the word, for it was the charity of the heart as well as of the hand. And she was not alone zealous to relieve the distressed, but to inform, instruct,

and, with a guardian angel's care, watch over the interests of those she loved.

The coldly prudent part of the world call such zeal presumption, ridicule the enthusiasm of a feeling heart, and esteem themselves patterns of prudence because they allow every body to go their own way and take care of themselves; and, when misfortunes overtake a friend and plunge him into irretrievable ruin, then wisely shake their heads and inform him that they foresaw it long ago. Most people think they perform all the duties of friendship when they lament over the errors and misfortunes of their friends; but to know that an evil threatens which one word might avert—to believe that advice might arrest a friend in the swift course of destruction, and yet withhold it—to behold impending ruin, and silently permit it, is to be guilty of all the consequences. The blow which my arm might arrest is given with my consent, and the life which I might have saved I am answerable for.

They tell you it is a thankless office, which is always repaid with ingratitude. This is the language of selfishness, the argument of an interested heart, which would confine charity to a posted and legered interchange of courtesies; but a good action repays itself. In contemplating the glorious work we have performed, we ask nothing from gratitude, and in the success of our efforts are more than rewarded!

Lady G—— possessed the happy art of instructing, while she appeared to trifle; of drawing useful deductions from the passing events of the moment, and insensibly leading the mind from investigation of particular characters to useful general reflections. If she observed error in others, it was with a view of correcting it in herself; and she ever felt triumph in the discovery of a virtue, since it added one more example to the catalogue of human excellence. Sir William loved her not alone as the gay companion of his social hours, the syren who chaced care and

languor from his heart; but as the wise and dispassionate friend, whose judgment strengthened his reason, and whose virtuous example ennobled his nature.

"I entered the gay circles of life," said he, one day, when our conversation turned on the advantages of education in women; "I entered the gay circles of life full of academic enthusiasm, having studied women only in books. I believed them all angels. Love approached me under a thousand bewitching forms, and my muse, obedient to my fervent invocations, exhausted the regions of fancy and illustration, to deck each fleeting idol. Disappointed enthusiasm soon sinks into misanthropy, as tepid water freezes faster than temperate. I set out on a tour to the Continent, an idolater of the sex; but having detected a few instances of treachery, meanness, and vice, adorned by brilliant talents and fascinating manners, the ideas of intellectual refinement and depravity of heart became so united in my

mind, that I could never behold the former without suspecting the latter its companion. I learned to mistrust the soft air of attractive complacency, the melting tongue of sentiment, and the playful vivacity of wit, which I believed were merely brought forward like jewels, to sparkle in society, and were then laid by as too fine for the domestic circle and every-day life. I discovered artifice in every word, deceit in every smile, and accused the entire sex of the faults of a few. Thus it is that a knowledge of vice is called a knowledge of the world. In short, I learned to despise woman because chance and my own want of discrimination brought me acquainted with a few "fair defects of nature;" and when the death of my father obliged me to return to England, I resolved to retrieve the wasted patrimony of my ancestors by a prudent marriage, and to secure the peace and honor of my life by a union with prudence and unsophisticated simplicity. I therefore shunned the gay,

the accomplished, and the beautiful, and turned my attention to the insipid, whom I called mild—the ignorant, whom I called innocent—and the silent, whom I called modest. These passive patterns of conjugal security, these stately models of negative virtues and unobtruding worth, these are they to whom we impute amiable qualities, because we see that they do not possess agreeable ones. Thus the want of excellence secures some from censure, for all are willing to praise whom none can envy, while we should never hear of the faults of others were it not for their merits.

"At length my heart (no, not my heart, but my reason) made an election, flattered by the undisguised attentions of a family whose fortunes and connexions appeared to me unexceptionable. I became the cold, listless lover of Elizabeth; my self-love was flattered at what I considered a distinguished preference, forgetting that her want of attractions was my best security against rivals, and that she

who has had no opportunity of selecting; but accepts a lover merely because he is the first that offers, can give no very flattering proof of discrimination. It was a protracted, prudent courtship, enlivened neither by hopes nor by fears.

"I consoled myself with the idea that the prudence of the wife would repay me for the insipidity of the mistress; and her apparent freedom from some faults reconciled me to the absence of many perfections. But the want of active virtues often produce real evils, and those negative qualities which fit us for solitude are insufficient for the busy, ensnaring, trying scenes of life. I drew arguments to strengthen myself in the sacrifice I meditated from the very unwillingness I felt to make it. I fancied, that because I was rendering myself miserable, I must certainly be actuated by wise and pure motives. I forgot, that to be the slave of prejudice is as bad as to be the slave of passion, and never suspected my-

self to be under an illusion, since that illusion carried with it no charm. In short, I deceived myself by my very efforts to secure myself against deception.

"But the mists of error were soon dispelled, and the moment that first presented Caroline to my eyes seemed to me the commencement of a new existence! I saw her beautiful and admired; yet simple, sincere, and unaffected, her heart overflowing with cheerfulness and sensibility, tempered with thoughtful dignity and self-possession. Her's was not the accidental prudence of circumstance and situation, of apathy or pride, nor the fleeting effervescence of sentiment, uncertain in duration and changing in principle; it was the calm security of a heart governed by reason and religion, which no sophistry could deceive, and accompanied with a grace so winning, an air so free from prudery and restraint, that the most unfeeling and depraved were forced to acknowledge its power; and the practice was ad-

mired even when the principle was rejected.

"I now looked back with horror and surprise to that phantom which a fastidious suspiciousness had conjured up and dignified with the name of virtue. How prejudice perverts the best understanding! how soon a prudent caution degenerates into unjust suspicion! and how ingeniously does the vanity of thinking differently from others teach us to argue! Excellencies become faults, and faults perfections. We lay down a maxim; to support which, we see actions not as they are, but as we wish them to be, employ sophistry to convince others, which deceives only ourselves, and end by sacrificing our happiness to a chimerical necessity. I had calculated on the correct principles of a woman, merely because I saw in her none of those attractive graces (which, though they may be copied by vice, are the natural effects of virtue); I mistook the modesty of neglect for the delicate reserve of feminine timidity; I forgot how little reliance ought to

be placed on a heart that never reveals itself, and that if reserve be a proof of gentleness and prudence, it is as often a proof of stupidity or sullen carelessness, which, incapable of pleasing or feeling pleasure, takes refuge under the imposing aspect of diffidence, and with its own darkness shadows the surrounding objects.

"Docile meekness and blushing simplicity, however amiable as part of a character, are a miserable substitute for that intelligence, that mental charm, which speaks to the understanding as well as to the heart, which gives dignity to beauty and sentiment to timidity, which secures a husband from the terror of seeing his wife, instead of the elegant hostess, acting the awkward novice, rude and vulgar from *mauvaise honte*, and sullen from conscious inferiority. The best protection against ignoble passions and dangerous pursuits, is the possession of a various, refined, and cultivated understanding. Devoid of such resources, we

lean upon the hollow pomp of worldly situation, to support the falling fabric of self importance, or plunge into the giddy vortex of dissipation, to keep the vapid mind from preying upon itself. A simple and uninformed mind, be it ever so virtuously inclined, is liable to be imposed on by specious appearances and sophistical ingenuity; but an experienced and cultivated understanding, a habit of observation and reasoning, teach not alone to triumph over temptation, but, wiser still, to foresee and avoid it.

"Whoever looks abroad into the world, and observes folly and depravity that were once simplicity, will confess that the head is the best preceptor to the heart, and that ignorance is almost another name for vice. Shall we then make that a criterion in choosing a wife, which we would reject in every other relation of life? Shall we endeavour to exalt her virtues, by degrading her nature? Since we cannot make the world as it ought to be, and must live in

it as it is; since we cannot make a world suited to her, we must suit her to the world. Virtuous emotions are so strongly implanted in our natures, that few would be seduced by vice, did it not steal into the heart under the attractive semblance of virtue. Substituting the love of virtue for its duties, we shed upon our actions the lustre of the virtuous impulses that preceded them. Can that knowledge, then, be useless or dangerous, which shews us with what delusive sophistry the heart may impose on itself and be undone; which discovers to us the flattering fallacies of self-love; which convinces us that an impartial investigation of our own hearts is necessary in a world where tenderness, sensibility, every fond and cherished affection of the heart may be the very means of betraying it? In a word, to avoid evil, we must know it; to shun danger, we must anticipate it. Better to learn experience from others, than dearly to purchase it ourselves. It is too late

for simplicity to say, 'Alas, I have been deceived!'"

Sir William smiled at his own warmth. "I am well aware," said he, "that a false construction might be put upon my words by those who argue for ever in extremes; who believe all or nothing; who either grasp an opinion at the first glance, and adhere to it with pertinacious obstinacy, or reject with contempt what they have not patience to examine or judgment to comprehend: to such minds I should never address myself on this or any other subject that requires candid and liberal discussion. They would suppose, that because I do not consider silence an undoubted proof of prudence, wisdom, and modesty, I would therefore recommend loquacity as an indispensable qualification, and make all virtue consist in boisterous spirits, laughter, and frolic; or that, when I talk of ignorance being another name for vice, I would make every woman a scholar, teach her to wage war with the chronologists, philoso-

phers, and logicians of the day, and bid her hurl the thunders of Greek and Latin at the head of a presumptuous lover. Such studies would certainly defend her against the flattering snares of admiration and love; but I should be sorry to see her protected by a want of attractions, and the graceful elegance of feminine acquirements lost in the jargon of scholastic pedantry and the formality of scientific precision. If ignorance is dangerous on the one hand, pedantry is disgusting on the other.

"I should wish to see a woman learned enough to think justly and converse rationally; to add to the charms of society by those light and affecting touches which the heart alone can inspire, but which require the polish of literature to express with elegance and grace, which makes wit at one poignant and delicate, and tempers gaiety by a habit of thinking and reasoning. Nature should be ornamented, not distorted; and while a literary taste renders a woman independent of society, and

enables her to dispense with those frivolous pleasures which often lead her into scenes of extravagance and dissipation, it also fits her to be the companion of a man of sense, and to reward a life of study and thought by an intelligent participation in his pursuits."

CHAP. XIV.

In enumerating the advantages which woman derives from education, Sir William overlooked one of the most essential to herself as well as to society in general; I mean, as it affects her conduct in the relation of a mother. That the impressions of infancy are radically interwoven with the future character, is universally allowed: the temper is then formed, the mind receives its bias, and it requires not alone a penetrating judgment to discover the nice intricacies of that assemblage of contradictions, the human heart, but a wise and judicious management, to enable us to suit the various means of improvement to the capacity, temper, and disposition of each individual. This talent of discovering character, of tracing the passions to their

remotest cause, and knowing by what associations the mind may be governed, is the practical philosophy which makes mankind wiser and happier. It is not alone a necessary qualification in the orator, the statesman, and the poet; but it forms the liberal companion in private life; it corrects the prejudices of mankind, and fits us for the high and important task of educating youth.

But how many amiable women, with the best possible intentions, for want of an enlarged view of the subject, lay the foundation of future misery for themselves and their children. They ask you, what more a mother can do, than teach her children their prayers and their lessons; whip them when they are bold, and treat them with toys and sweetmeats when they are good? Others rest their claims upon that doating fondness which can refuse the little angels nothing. "Infancy," they say, "is the sweet season of innocence and joy; when, forgetful of the past, care-

less of the future, and enjoying with avidity the new and attractive pleasures of life, it seems appointed by Heaven as the only period of existence free from anxiety and regret. How cruel," they exclaim, "to anticipate those sorrows which the world has yet in store for them, and make the heart of infancy, so pure, so unsuspecting, so full of hope, rapture, and expectation, taste the bitter cup of disappointment while yet unacquainted with its name!"

Such is the language of maternal tenderness. When yielding to the softness of a mother's love, it ceases to perform a mother's duty! and to save a few infant tears, whose course is arrested by a smile, permits those storms to gather which overwhelm their mature years with misery and crimes. Fatal indulgence! the liberty they now enjoy is dearly purchased by future slavery; for what bondage so cruel as that of the passions? what tyrant so despotic as a vitiated heart? But unjust severity

injures even more than neglect; it corrodes the heart with discontent, teaches cunning and hyprocrisy, creates every malignant passion while it smothers every noble one, and, by robbing youth of innocent recreations, inspires a taste for low and dangerous amusements. What a woeful picture do some domestic scenes present, where the cheerful smile and sportive sally of youth are repressed, and the trembling group of weeping sufferers, in all the torturing shackles of collars and stocks, sit prim, sullen, and demure, sob out the detested task, and ponder a thousand schemes of remuneration when freed from the hateful bondage that looks to them like tyranny and caprice.

Some reading ladies, resolved to soar above vulgar prejudices, study those "dull receipts" for education, and follow with blind credulity every wild and impracticable theory they contain. Incapable of forming an opinion independent of books, they

become dupes to the "vulgar prejudices of the learned," forgetting that many recommend a system, not to benefit mankind, but to display their own ingenuity; that a man of genius sometimes talks nonsense, and that every theory should be governed by circumstances.

It is the business of a mother to study the hearts of her children, and to know how to apply general rules to particular instances. Whatever impressions we would wish to make indelible, should be introduced in the most pleasing form, and associated with agreeable images. Moral truths should be drawn from the passing events of the day, from those little incidents, which, by striking the fancy, arrest the attention, and gradually lead the mind into that vague and undefined reverie which lays it open to impressions either dangerous or useful. Why is not religion made as agreeable to the minds of youth as many less noble studies? Simply be-

cause it is introduced under an unpleasing form: it is imposed on children as a task; their Catechism has procured them as many whippings as their grammar, and they are forced to read the Scriptures as a punishment for idleness. But if the Deity were spoken of as all-good and all-powerful by a tender mother in moments of affection; if his love and goodness were dwelt upon, instead of the terrors of his wrath; if every thing relative to religion wore the appearance of gladdening the heart, and a participation in its exercises were held out as a reward, and united with an idea of glory, honor, and felicity; the young heart would learn to associate a sacred and noble pleasure with its name, and would for ever retain so sweet an impression.

Few parents think of instructing their children through the medium of familiar conversation; if they supply them with books and masters, and teach the outward forms of good breeding, they think they have fulfilled their duty; but it is in the

domestic circle, when the heart is unfolded by kindness, when opinions are freely given and candidly discussed, it is then the young mind begins to investigate and reason, to distinguish between virtue and the semblance of it, to form opinions independent of fashion and prejudice, and, by investigating the hearts of others, discover all the weakness of their own.

Thus children know the world before they encounter its snares; and parents, by discovering the extent of their understandings and the peculiar bias of their minds, are enabled to direct their remarks to the advantage of each, and to instruct without the ungracious formality of lectures.

But how can she, who has never examined her own heart, know how to judge of others? Can she, who knows no virtues but those of habit and constraint; who has ever had some one to think for her and direct her actions, without convincing her understanding; who has been taught to consider every exertion of her

understanding unfeminine and presumptuous; can a being so superficial perform a task of such importance? No, she will make her children formal automatons or vicious romps; she will spoil them one half the day, and whip them the other.

In choosing a companion for life, a wise man will consider all this; he will ask himself how he would feel if, in the mother of his children, he beheld a being incapable of forming their minds to virtue; one whose weak indulgence or injudicious instruction, instead of repressing, would increase their natural faults, and whose insipid conversation could neither inspire them with respect for herself nor create one elevated sentiment.

Oh, what must be the feelings of a fond father, when forced to relinquish to strangers the important task which maternal love ought to fulfil; when his daughters, exiled from his house, are consigned to the uncertain guidance of mercenary hirelings, and subjected to the

contamination of a public school. There they may possibly become accomplished girls; but what is to make them virtuous women? Is it among fifty or sixty noisy romps that they are to imbibe correct principles and domestic tastes? Possibly they may sometimes hear formal lectures on religion and virtue; but such lectures cannot be adapted to the particular tempers and dispositions of each individual, for in a public school there is neither time nor motive for such minute investigation. Its fame depends upon the shewy accomplishments of the pupils: it may ingraft learning, but it does not prune vices; it may teach young ladies to talk, but it seldom furnishes them with materials for conversation; it may make artists and scholars, coquettes and opera-dancers, but it can never inspire the virtues nor correct the errors of the heart, like the watchful solicitude of maternal love.

The indiscriminate society of a boarding-school is dangerous to the purity of a

young mind. In such a variety, there will be always found some with vicious dispositions; and one ill-disposed child can taint an entire school. And what is to be acquired there, which can compensate such dangers?—a superficial knowledge of music executed without taste or judgment —a few shewy drawings manufactured by the master—theatrical grimace instead of dancing, and levity disguised under a demure and studied decorum. Such an education might suit the sex, had they no higher destination than to sing and dance like slaves, before their lords, the despised and ignoble toy of his vacant hours; but it cannot fit them for the dignified relations of a wife, a mother, and a mistress of a family; it cannot make them companions for a man of sense, nor accustom them to the management of those domestic concerns which are the province of every woman, from the peeress to the peasant. A fashionable education is dearly purchased with such sacrifices! how much

more captivating are the simple graces of nature, when the heart is warm and the understanding cultivated, than the prim and artificial manners of one of those over-educated misses who fancy themselves finished patterns of elegance because nature has yielded her empire to art and affectation.

CHAP. XV.

THE society round Sir William's cottage, though perhaps not individually superior to that near Castle G——, was more agreeable in its effect; it owed its charms not to mere brilliant wit, mere dazzling acquirements—not to the pomp of equipage, nor the fictitious stimulant of public amusements—it was the calm enjoyment of rational conversation without the labour of disputation or anxieties of rival talent; the polish more of sentiment than of fashion, that sincere cordiality of manner which never fails to create the sentiment it expresses—it was, in a word, that something which no tongue can describe, but which every heart acknowledges.

Here, at length, I reposed myself in confidence and security; every kind

emotion was unfolded by the intercourse of congenial minds, and I became gradually reconciled to the world when I found I had yet something to hope for and enjoy. I could say: "This is no illusion of the senses, no impracticable dream of rapture and perfection; it is a sober conviction of my understanding, the result of reason more than of passion; it is the contentment of a heart corrected by disappointment, humbled, but not broken."

Every day discovered some new trait of excellence in the characters of this amiable family: their friendship, displayed without ostentation, was soothing to my feelings and flattering to my pride. To them I could bear to be obliged; for every favor was conferred with such ease and cordial good will, that I lost all the pain of obligation, and felt conscious of nothing but the kindness of the giver. Thank Heaven, I have none of that ungracious delicacy which is satisfied to appear unfriendly rather than risk being thought obtrusive!

The whole family united in the humane effort of drawing me from the contemplation of past sorrows. The task was easier than they imagined; they employed the most delicate address and judicious arguments. But though argument might have convinced, it was experience and feeling alone which could produce a radical change in my sentiments. They might talk with the wisdom of Socrates and the eloquence of Cicero, but one smile from Julia was more persuasive than all their periods; and the most glowing description of earthly felicity, the most finished picture of human excellence would have failed to affect me, had I never known the virtues nor experienced the happiness which dwelt in their domestic circle. In fact, the greatest happiness I enjoyed was not being obliged to appear happy. I never found myself called on to act the delighted guest and admiring auditor, nor was forced to light up my eyes and look excessively vivacious, or else run the risk

of hearing half sullen, half humble apologies for the dullness of the house. There was no exertion made to amuse me, and for that reason not a moment hung heavy on my hands.

Some very civil people think that the greatest misfortune in life is to be left alone, and accordingly worry their unfortunate visitors with an eternal attendance. Sir William's family had very different ideas of politeness. I wandered amidst the luxuriant shades that skirted the lake, unmolested by polite intruders. I returned to the drawing-room, without having to answer a volley of silly questions about the heat of the sun or the coldness of the wind: no one laid by their books at my approach, and I was suffered to choose my own seat without the lap-dog being trod on or the screen upset to hand me one. Sweetly did memory bring back the occurrences of every past day; the bewitching manners, the amiable sentiments, the playful graces of the lively enchantress

who graced our solitude, were ever present to my imagination; the refreshing air conveyed joy and vigour to my spirits, and wherever my eyes turned, the most sublime and affecting objects of nature presented themselves to my view.

But often would I quit the valley where fragance, shade, and music, united their spells to detain me, and hastily climbing the mountain's side, turn from the extended lake, the ample groves, and pointed tops of those mountains, which seemed to form a barrier between the world and me, to seek that blest abode where every wish of my soul was now centered. With what tears of fond delight have I gazed and almost worshipped; for I knew that an angel dwelt there, and I thought of it as I would of Heaven! The first sound I heard in the morning was the voice of Julia singing; it was the last sound I heard at night. I never entered her company without feeling my spirits cheered and refreshed; her kind eyes made their

way to the heart, they shone with the best feelings of humanity, and whoever felt their influence, imbibed a portion of the sentiment by which they were enlivened. Our family circle at Sir William's was the scene in which her talents and virtues appeared most conspicuous. It was then she displayed all that delicate address which renders instruction so delightful, that tenderness of soul without which beauty ceases to captivate and virtue to charm; all those fascinating graces which make the influence of woman so fatal when ill directed, or so affecting an incitement to every thing virtuous and noble.

Julia presented a striking instance of that union of captivating graces and sober virtues, which those, who have known only the worst part of the sex, are so apt to reckon incompatible with each other; her charms were the offspring of her virtues; it was the sweetness of her disposition that gave to her countenance that ineffable expression of benignity which constitutes its

highest charms; her elegance of manner was the combined result of benevolence and good sense, the composure of innocence, discrimination to see what is agreeable, and good nature to practise it.

When the playful sallies of a lively and brilliant imagination diffused their cheering influence around, the most attentive observer could discover nothing but the artless overflowings of an innocent heart at peace with itself and all the world, free at once from melancholy retrospection, and gloomy forebodings. Nothing is so difficult as to trifle agreeably, to talk nonsense without being foolish, to be gay without levity, and witty without buffoonery. When the heart lays itself open in mirth, an attentive observer will discover traits of character which would not be betrayed in years of formal intercourse. Thus we often see the most demure manners veiling the most depraved hearts, because a studied and cautious reserve is the only resource

of her who dares not be natural lest she should be impudent: while, secure in native purity, the transparent soul of innocence fears no detection.

Wherever Julia appeared, pleasure followed in her train; she united elegance with simplicity, and sentiment with mirth. Often, when I thought myself only amused by her wit, my attention was arrested by some profound and original idea, and my heart was touched by the unaffected grandeur of her sentiments. Thus, while the charms of her conversation "took the prisoned soul and rapt it in Elysium," still that pure and gentle heart, nobly superior to vanity, wished to be loved for its virtues alone. Julia was too proud to be vain: pride can take root only in great minds, for it requires a rich soil to nourish it; while vanity, wafted on each light breath of flattery, is scattered without judgment, and flourishes in the most barren soil.

To promote the happiness of all those

within her circle, was the study of her life, and the means which she employed was promoting their virtues. Ever attentive to the wants of others, zealous in the cause of the unhappy, she was the friend of all who required her assistance, the enemy of nothing but vice; her heart was the seat of beneficence and love; from her lips flowed the language of kindness, and her smile was that of conciliation and peace. Was Julia to become an ordinary woman, stripped at once of all those graces by which she is so eminently distinguished, still she would possess virtues which would ever insure her the love and esteem of all her acquaintance; then Julia would be cried up as a pattern of domestic virtues, of prudence, and good sense; but because she has superadded to those qualities attractive and brilliant manners, envy calls her superficial, suspicion doubts her prudence, ignorance fears, and stupidity cannot understand her.

Such is the reward of superior excellence. Who then would seek popularity when it can be obtained only by ceasing to deserve it? Better to be loved by few, and by those well, than to be in every one's mouth and in no one's heart.

It was in vain to attempt deceiving myself as to the nature of my attachment to Julia; but though I sometimes dared to flatter myself that her eyes spoke a language most flattering to my hopes, I read my destiny in my own merit, and despairing of success, resolved to withdraw from the dangerous contemplation.

Again was I indebted to the friendship of Augustus. "Could you," said he, "by relinquishing the pursuit, forget the object, then it would be for you to choose between a state of certain but negative content, or the chances of felicity with her: but this is no boyish attachment; you are now arrived at an age when the heart obeys the voice of reason; you have

seen much of the world; you know women well, and are no longer the dupe of romantic sensibility. From my knowledge of your disposition, and the observations I have lately made, I am convinced, that, however you may have deceived yourself, you never really loved any woman but Julia, and I believe the passion inspired by such a woman is not easily overcome. But because there is a chance of your failing, you wisely resolve not to give yourself an opportunity of succeeding; you make that certain which was merely possible, and remind me of a man who, being told by a necromancer that he would die on a certain day, poisoned himself through terror!

"I admire decent humility, and esteem the man who rather undervalues his own merits; but when humility sinks and debases the mind, checks us in the pursuit of happiness and honorable fame; when it teaches us to fly from fancied evils, and

to act upon mere doubts, as if they were realities—then humility degenerates into meanness, and the most amiable quality becomes the parent of the most ignoble vices. Believe me, humility often creates obstacles by supposing them, and we lose more by fearing to attempt, than by unworthiness to succeed! But suppose, for a moment, that Julia, so far from intending to reject your suit, has already bestowed her affections in the full assurance of the passion's being reciprocal; what will you be guilty of, if, obeying a rash impulse of pride, you fly from the anticipated rejection, and leave her a prey to eternal regret and disappointment? Ah, my friend, a man should consider how far his pride will permit him to go, before he risks the peace of a female heart by those dangerous little attentions, which, though not obtrusive, are striking; which may be felt, but cannot be questioned."

Augustus was right; he knew the heart

of my faithful and tender Julia; I yielded to his arguments, and received from her lips the sweet assurance which renders me the happiest of men.

CHAP. XVI.

How little, in the first paroxysms of my wild despair, did I foresee the possibility of such a revolution in my heart. I yielded to the sensations of the moment—sensations which I believed to be indelible, and felt, that, next to the evil I had already endured, a state of tranquillity would be the greatest misfortune that could befal me. But if the mind could explore futurity, and anticipate the inevitable change which even one year produces in our feelings, the voice of despair would be silent, and the uplifted arm of the suicide would drop into the humble posture of resignation, or be raised to Heaven in the ardent expression of thanksgiving and hope.

While suffering the cruel pangs of hope-

less disappointment, I returned to a world I detested; I returned not to enjoy life, but to gratify the malignity of a wounded heart, by "tracing the hidden recesses of that den of folly—the human mind." I was not disappointed: I met abundance of follies, vices, and errors; but, encouraged by success, and hoping that the deeper I dived into the motives and springs of human action, the more I should be strengthened in those sentiments of abhorrence which I loved to cherish, I laid aside my gloomy and suspicious air of misanthropy, and gradually insinuated myself into intimacy and confidence. But intimacy, while it adds nothing to the catalogue of human imperfection, discovers a thousand latent springs of good, and by laying open the motives that actuate, and the feelings that incite, often proves even our worst actions the consequence of some splendid deception, some passion that originated perhaps in an amiable sensibility, some subtle im-

position of the understanding, which, though fatal in their result, still prove that the heart is more weak than depraved.

Often, where the rudest and most ferocious vices dwell, some spontaneous virtues burst forth with an uncontrolled and striking vehemence, leaving us in doubt whether fear, hatred, or respect, are the feelings most excited. But in the pride of cynical philosophy, we forget the compound nature of the human heart, where virtues and vices are so closely allied, that the one is often lost in the other. We see actions of vice with motives of virtue, while motives degrading to our nature often lead to honorable results in the world. In the rapid glance of superficial observation, we are struck by the bold and conspicuous features of a landscape, and overlook its mild and unobtruding beauties. Thus one fault is observed, while a thousand virtues are neglected. An infamous character is soon blazoned abroad, morality

exposes it as an object of abhorrence, and wit employs its lighter weapons to render it contemptible. But virtue, whose scene is retirement, whose best deeds are performed in secret, glides peaceful through the happy walks of private life, unnoticed and unpraised.

Self-love is the source whence our discontent to mankind proceeds: in proportion as we prize and value ourselves, we are sensible to every wound, every neglect, which chance more than malice inflicts. Making ourselves the central point round which every thing revolves, we judge of actions only as they affect our peculiar tastes, prejudices, or interests: we call a man the worst on earth, because he has injured ourselves; while the man we most esteem has perhaps equally injured another. And while the arrogance of self-love continually draws upon us that contempt to which, at the same time, it renders us so sensitive, we are ignorant that in our

own heart lies the cause, whose effect we so loudly censure and so feelingly deplore. It is experience which corrects the gloomy prejudices of misanthropy, it shews man a being made up of contradictions—even in his greatness mean—even in his folly interesting: it teaches that he is no where so fallen and depraved as not to possess some amiable qualities; that the spark of divine light, though it may lie dormant, is never wholly extinct; but that, to expect perfection, is to ensure disappointment.

FINIS.

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